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# A **Russian Shylock**

A PLAY IN FOUR ACTS

By

**M. ZAMETKIN**

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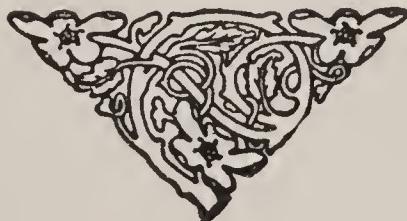
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# RUSSIAN SHYLOCK

A PLAY IN FOUR ACTS

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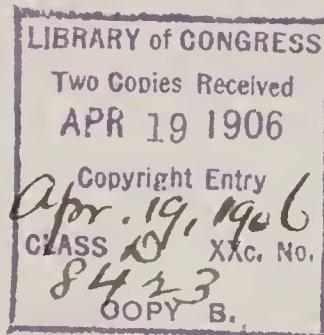
M. ZAMETKIN



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1906

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DEDICATED TO  
ADELLA KEAN,  
My Dearest Friend and Comrade.

THE AUTHOR.



## PERSONS REPRESENTED.

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SOLOMON ISAACOVICH HERZFARB (The Shylock of Ensk),  
46 years of age.

MIRIAM, his mother, 63 years of age.

ESTHER, his sister, a childless widow, 35 years of age.

ROSALYA SOLOMONOVNA (ROSALIE), his daughter, 22 years  
of age.

PHINEAS ABRAAMOVICH MILMAN, his friend, a merchant  
of Ensk.

NATALYA OSIPOVNA RETVINSKAYA (NATALIE), the Major's  
daughter, 26 years of age.

IVAN IVANOVICH (The Grumbler), an aged servant.

MORDECAI, tailor.

MASHA, maidservant.

*In the first act, the action takes place at the summer residence of the Herzfarbs, in a Russian manufacturing village in the vicinity of the town of Ensk. Then it is transferred to the Herzfarbs' town residence at Ensk.*



## ACT I.

*Comfortably spacious and well-kept grounds in the rear of a rich man's substantial country house. Patches of flower beds, stretching beyond the stage, on the left. In the depth of the stage, running through its entire breadth, is a tall fence with locked gate on the extreme left. In the center, a little forward, is a large leafy tree, shading the settee under it; movable leather cushions on the settee; in front of it a plain deal table, rather heavy. On the table a box of cigars, a silver cigar case, a match-and-ash dish, not very costly; a cigar stump; a fine, black silk skull-cap.*

*On the left, another table at which Rosalya Solomonovna Herzfarb is busily at work preparing parcels for her next round of charity. Masha and Ivan Ivanovitch are with her. On the table are all sorts of things; as, a number of new stockings, ribbons, a New Testament, a Jewish prayer book, a cheap shawl, a tobacco pouch, some A B C's, some cheap picture books, a slate, knitting needles, pieces of soap, medicinal jars and bottles, etc., etc. In front of her, a hand-satchel into which she packs away some of the things, checking them off in her notebook. Alongside of the satchel a number of bills and a dishful of silver coins, with which she fills a number of envelopes, marking the address and the sum; these also go into the satchel. On the ground in front of her is an open trunk, from which Masha produces the things that go to make up the pile on the table. Ivan Ivanovitch watches the*

proceedings in respectful silence. Rosalie is experienced in the work, and knows what she wants; however, she hesitates at times, and, on second thought, stops in the making up of one parcel and takes up another instead.

On the right, about a yard from the fence, thus leaving a passage to the front of the house and thence to the street, is the rear wall, with porch and stairs to the grounds. On the porch is seen Solomon Isaacovich Herzfarb; on his lap a book which he does not read. He lights a match, feels in his pocket for cigars, is unsuccessful, throws away the match; then lights a cigarette and throws it away impatiently after a few puffs. Esther Isaacovna Herzfarb comes out on the porch. A pantomime ensues, with characteristically Jewish gesticulations. She obviously wants him to do something; he is only annoyed. Unsuccessful, she re-enters the house. He descends into the grounds; is thoughtful and puzzled. As he passes the table in the center he greedily grabs at his cigar case, fills it with fresh cigars from the box, puts on his skull-cap, and with a cigar in his mouth approaches the group on the extreme left; seems to watch them a while (unheeded by them), and disappears, obviously seeking for solitude in some further corner of the grounds. Another porch, still more forward, for the servants.

A number of odd chairs are scattered about the grounds. It is late in the afternoon, on a clear day, late in August. The grounds, toward the front, are in the shade thrown off by the house. Outside the

fence, a Russian manufacturing village is seen in the distance.

ROSALIE: (*Producing a receipt, puts it in an envelope; then, as an after-thought, adds a paper ruble*).

MASHA: Bless you, Rosalya Solomonovna. Won't they be glad. There, you devil of a collector, I say, stick this receipt in your throat. But that ruble—no, sir; your arms are not long enough; you cannot grab that; that's for the family. Oh-oh-oh, a widow's lot. And wasn't he—Micola, that is—of iron build? Strong as an oak, and a hard-working man, Micola was; wasn't he, Ivan Ivanitch?

IVAN: So he was; never a word to say against it. (*To-Rosalie*) And why should he not be? A poor man has to work. Work—it follows clearly—is the poor man's passport, Rosalya Solomonovna. There, poor devil, take it; for a month or two, as one's luck may be, and stray about in the world—a crumb to eat while it lasts. Yes, young lady, bless you. That's what it is, my little mother.

MASHA: (*Sighs*) Oh—oh—oh! (*Produces from the trunk a long string of much-used carpenter's tools*).

IVAN: Andrushka the Shaggy One's this is?

MASHA: And whose else can it be?

IVAN: That's it. "You fool," say I to him, "You deserve a mighty good flogging. That's what you should be given to teach you well, you fool," I say. "It follows clearly; stop drinking." But a poor man must drink—that's what it is. Yes. Here I am—picked up from the gutter, so to speak, by your father, Solomon Isaac'ich, bless him. Says he: "Will you drink, you devil's guy?" "In no way, I won't," say I.—"Upon your conscience?" says he.—"There

is the cross for you, good sir," say I. And he sent me to the lumber yard. Got my passport, that is. I got my passport. And not a drop ever since. Not a drop. Of course, for appetite, or, say, on a holiday—that's a different line, that is. A man must have a drop once in a while. It follows clearly one cannot do without it.

Ros. SOL.: (*To Sol. Is.*) A puzzling task, wasn't it, papa?

SOL. Is.: What?

Ros. SOL.: To find the cigars. Shakespeare is a hard nut to crack, it seems. You are so thoughtful.

SOL. Is.: Well, well! It is curious to see how small a great mind may be—at times.

Ros. SOL.: I wonder what he is like in the original. But I must first be through with my Byron. What are you reading now?

SOL. Is.: The Merchant of Venice.

Ros. SOL.: A grand conception, isn't it?

SOL. Is.: Oh, yes. A grand conception and a grander lie.

Ros. SOL.: (*Laughing*) Well, papa, poets are the only liars that speak the truth.

SOL. Is.: Not always; not always.

(*Exit Sol. Isaakovitch.*)

Iv. IVAN.: Yes, ma-am. That was long ago, when master was pleased to pick me up from the gutter. Took pity, that is. You were then but a wee bit of a little girl, Rosalya Solomonovna, you were, be it not mentioned to offend you. Yes, and a tom-boy. Eh, what a tom-boy, and self-willed! Oooh-ooh! That's how it used to be. "Attention!" (*Assumes the corresponding soldierly attitude*) "At-ten-tion!"

Yes, sir. Ca-ap-tain! (*Laughs softly*) He-he-he! So I say, Andrushka the Shaggy One, a good flogging—that's what would fit you exactly. It follows clearly, you have but one way, I say. See our young lady, and make a clean breast of it, I say. But heed me well. No lying talk to her, I say. It won't work. She is a shrewd one—that's you, Rosalya Solomonovna—is a shrewd one and knows what is what.—“So and so, kind madam, was on a spree, and pawned my tools to get vodka.” And now here they are (*pointing at the tools*) one and all. There, take them and mind your work, you rascally fool. Yes. A poor man must work. But I say, Rosalya Solomonovna—be it your pleasure—I say, “Won't it be money thrown away? He is good for nothing, that fellow is.

Ros. SOL.: Ah, Ivan Ivanitch, it is a sin to speak thus. Should we be better in his place?

IVAN: (*With suppressed resentment*) We in his place! Thank you most humbly. We are your servants, young lady. Have many a thing to look after. Here a clear head is wanted. One must be in good shape and sober.

(Enters Natalya Osipovna Retvinskaya.)

(She is neatly dressed in a plain, light walking-suit, bespeaking frugality; a closed sunshade in one hand, in the other a scroll of loose music sheets. As she appears in the passage between the fence and the house, she looks about her in search of Rosalie.)

Iv. IV.: (*Continuing*) It follows clearly, Andrushka the Shaggy One isn't of a piece with us; a dog from quite another yard—that's what he is. Yes. “We in his place.” The grand squire!

Ros. SOL.: Let us not quarrel, Ivan Ivanich (*looking*

*slyly at him).* Now, take these tools to the poor fellow (*Ivan Ivanich brightens up with pleasure; he likes to do the errand*) and give (*she now notices the approaching Natalya Osipovna, is astonished and disturbed, but controls herself*) —and give—give—him a good lecture, my good Ivan Ivanovich.

Iv. Iv.: That I will, young lady. “You fool,” I’ll say—

MASHA: Ah! See, who is coming, Rosalya Solomonovna.

Ros. SOL.: Oh, Natalya Osipovna! (*Hastens to meet her. They shake hands, man fashion.* Ros.: “You here?” NAT. OS.: “Be easy, all is well!” *This hurriedly in subdued voices.*) Ah, how glad I am to see you! How kind of you to bring me the music yourself! Did you enjoy it?

NAT. OS.: Immensely, thank you.

Ros. SOL.: Isn’t it fine? Especially this, Tra-la-lala! (*Sings.*)

NAT. OS.: Beware, Ivan Ivanich. Masha is a cunning one. Look out! She’ll capture the brave warrior and lead him away at her apron strings. “It follows clearly,” look out! It will be worse than to march on Plevna.

Iv. Iv.: That it will, young lady. For it’s like this, Natalya Osipovna: some women folks (*glancing at Masha*) are worse than the Turk. (*Masha laughs.*)

Ros. SOL.: (*Offering her guest a chair*) You will be comfortable here in the shade. (*Relieves her of the sun-shade and the scroll of music. This she at once unrolls and sings, Tra-la-la-la.*)

NAT. OS.: Busy with your charities, I see. I haven’t disturbed you, I hope?

Ros. SOL.: Not at all. I have been making ready for to-morrow morning. Here, Masha, put these things back into the trunk, or rather, leave that for later (*putting the bills and silver and envelopes into the satchel*). Take this to my room, and tell Sarah—oh, never mind, I won't need you any more.

(*Exit Masha.*)

Iv. IV.: (*Still holding the tools, stiffly*) Your pleasure, Rosalya Solomonovna, about these here tools?

Ros. SOL.: Why, my good Ivan Ivanich, poor Andrushka may need them. You had better go at once.

Iv. IV.: Yes, ma-am. (*Waits*).

Ros. SOL.: What now?

Iv. IV.: (*More stiffly, but respectfully*) May it please you, young lady, to order what I shall tell him.

Ros. SOL.: (*Laughing*) Tell him, "It is a sin to drink," and so on. Give him a good lecture, as you know how. He needs it, poor fellow.

(*Exit Iv. Ivanich, murmuring, "Poor fellow! Poor fellow!" then snapping at Rosalie, "Drunken fellow, that's what he is!"*)

Ros. SOL.: Goodness, Natalie, you here! A second visit within this month. How imprudent!

NAT. OS.: (*Smiling reassuringly*) As I have told you, all is well; be at your ease.

Ros. SOL.: But what brings you here?

NAT. OS.: (*Smiling*) Guess.

Ros. SOL.: (*Astonished, looks up interrogatively*).

NAT. OS.: I come as a——spy!

Ros. SOL.: A spy?

NAT. OS.: An ugly word to use even in jest. Still, it fits

the case exactly. I come to pry into your affairs, or, rather, into those of your father.

Ros. SOL.: (*Disappointed*) Oh! And I thought—

NAT. OS.: Nor are you mistaken. (*Suddenly glancing uneasily about her, bends over to Rosalie and lowers her voice*) I bring good news; very good news. Let not the joy overwhelm you. Be firm. They may see us from the house, you know. Don't cry out.

Ros. SOL.: (*In a whisper, trying hard to control her excitement*) Uncle David—

NAT. OS.: (*Seizing her by both hands*) Be firm. He has escaped! (*In an energetic whisper*) Be firm. Control yourself.

Ros. SOL.: (*Instinctively wants to raise her hands to heaven, but Natalie holds them down*) Oh, God!

NAT. OS.: We may be seen; we may be watched.

Ros. SOL.: (*Firmly*) I have myself under control now. Tell me all.

NAT. OS.: Are you sure?

Ros. SOL.: Yes, yes.

NAT. OS.: (*Releasing her hands, and rising*) Come, let us have a turn or two in the grounds. Motion will help you master your excitement. Take my arm.

(*The two promenading arm in arm.*)

Ros. SOL.: Tell me all.

NAT. OS.: There is not much to tell. He is now safe in concealment. The comrades write they will try to make Irkutsk. In the meantime, he is safe; absolutely safe.

Ros. SOL.: Is he well? Tell me all, all.

NAT. OS.: He is well and cheerful, and as energetic as ever. The comrades are simply delighted with him. I'll

tell you the particulars later. We may be interrupted at any moment.

Ros. SOL.: You are right. It won't do to let them notice we have secrets. And, oh! what a secret! What a secret!

NAT. OS.: Gently, my dear friend, gently!

Ros. SOL.: Please let us go to my room.

NAT. OS.: A little later. The day is fine; we should naturally prefer to be out of doors.

Ros. SOL.: Then let us take a walk.

NAT. OS.: It will look suspicious. I am hardly rested from my walk hither. Besides, you must be thoroughly composed first. Meantime, I'll tell you on what pretext I am here. Do you listen?

Ros. SOL.: Yes.

NAT. OS.: Don't look so absent-minded. Collect your thoughts and listen to me.

Ros. SOL.: I listen.

NAT. OS.: Very well, now. Don't look away; look at me. That's it. Well, to put it plainly, I am here to cross-examine you.

Ros. SOL.: Me?

NAT. OS.: That is, to find out through you—remember, without making you aware of it—whether your father has really decided to move to town his mill, yards, and other plants.

Ros. SOL.: Oh, I see. At the same time you received the good news—of course, you burned the letter?

NAT. OS.: Certainly.

Ros. SOL.: And you were impatient to communicate with me?

NAT. OS. : As you may well imagine. The very ground seemed to burn under my feet.

ROS. SOL. : And you seized upon that nasty errand for a pretext?

NAT. OS. : It was a godsend.

ROS. SOL. : (*Feelingly*) I appreciate your kindness. (*Squeezes her arm.*)

NAT. OS. : (*Smiling*) Otherwise, I should have had to wait until I could notify you in the regular way. But I was careful. Why, I made papa accompany me on foot almost to your very door. All the world will know now that this my visit to you is of his instigation.

ROS. SOL. : (*Thoughtfully*) Your father isn't that kind of man, I am sure.

NAT. OS. : Poor papa. It was so hard for him to tell me what he wanted of me. He knows it's ugly. But, then, your father's decision in this matter will affect us most seriously.

ROS. SOL. : I didn't know it would hurt your family so much.

NAT. OS. : Of course, it won't ruin us—far from it. But it will cut off a big slice from father's income. On rents alone he reckons he will lose more than half of it, not to mention the very considerable depreciation of the property. It seems to be the general impression that a big slump in land values must follow. Your father, you see, employs at least two thousand men.

ROS. SOL. : Hm, yes—when we are particularly busy, I should say.

NAT. OS. : Anyway, Solomon Isaacovich is the largest employer. Should he move his plants, his working men will follow him to town, as they must; then the smaller

tradespeople will have to leave, and the place will soon be pretty much of a desert. It is only a village, after all.

Ros. SOL.: That's so, unfortunately.

NAT. OS.: One need not be an expert economist to understand that. And (*smiling sadly*) we have learned a thing or two in the tight-fisted science.

Ros. SOL.: My poor friend! You never dreamt, I am sure, of ever having to make use of your knowledge in reference to yourself.

NAT. OS.: Of course not. However, as I say, it won't ruin us. But *has* your father decided as we suppose he has?

Ros. SOL.: (*Reproachfully*) My dear friend, would I let you go on with these saddening economics of yours—

NAT. OS.: I thought so. So the report is true?

Ros. SOL.: Say, rather, it will be true.

NAT. OS.: (*Looks up interrogatively*).

Ros. SOL.: Papa has not made up his mind yet.

NAT. OS.: What does he say?

Ros. SOL.: He has not spoken to me about it. Poor papa! He has become so uncommunicative of late; so self-absorbed, thoughtful, and disturbed. Oh, he is disturbed in his mind, I can see that. He is obviously debating the question with himself. But from what I can glean from his occasional remarks—a word here, a hint there—I fear very much that your anxiety is well founded.

NAT. OSIP.: But you may be mistaken.

Ros. SOL.: Let us hope for the best.

NAT. OSIP.: He may lose quite a sum by it, they say.

Ros. SOL.: Perhaps, perhaps. But they don't know my father.

NAT. OSIP.: (*Slowly and thoughtfully*) Poor papa! It

is bad enough that his only son must work for a living ; be "apprenticed to a merchant," as he phrases it. And now this. Well, if the worse comes to the worse, we'll have to pinch and economize. Poor mother, it'll fall hardest on her, I fear. (*Sighs.*)

Ros. SOL. : Ah, what a time, this ! What a time ! You bring me joy ; I bring you sadness. You risk your liberty, dearest friend, to save my uncle—

NAT. OSIP. : Not your uncle, but *our* comrade.

Ros. SOL. : Yes, yes ; and how does his brother repay you !

NAT. OSIP. : But Solomon Isaacovich has not arrived at anything definite, as you yourself say.

Ros. SOL. : No. He has not said the word, if that's what you mean. But he will say it—his own losses notwithstanding. Oh, I know my father. I know him too well. If I could but speak with him, argue with him !

NAT. OSIP. : And thus disclose to him your views, your principles, your identity, your real self. Poor man. Be careful, Rosalie.

Ros. SOL. : But it will have to come some day. (*With a gesture of despair.*)

NAT. OSIP. : Then put it off as long as you can. I do the same. We must. Besides, I don't see any urgency just now. Surely Solomon Isaacovich cannot be expected any more than any other business man to be particularly solicitous of the convenience of his neighbors. Why should you, dear comrade, be at all put out by it ? The usual incidents of business. It is nothing new.

Ros. SOL. : It is not that. Poor papa ! Poor papa ! How he suffers !

NAT. OSIP.: (*Anxiously*) He doesn't suspect you, does he?

Ros. SOL.: Suspect me? Oh, no, why should he? I give him no cause. The gendarmerie themselves would think me harmless, since you and the comrades are so insistent.

NAT. OSIP.: Patience, dear friend, patience.

Ros. SOL.: I am patient. But it's *so* hard! To see you do everything, risk everything, and I—

NAT. OSIP.: All virtue is not in activity alone.

Ros. SOL.: Ah, but in action there is relief, a bracing tonic; and this is denied me.

NAT. OSIP.: (*Feelingly*) My poor friend, it cannot be otherwise.

Ros. SOL.: (*Sadly*) I know it.

NAT. OSIP.: Especially now that comrade David has escaped. Consider. It certainly cannot be very long before the local secret service will be notified, and they will be on the lookout for a clew; eager to act upon any theory, however improbable. Your family will be especially watched, and yourself more than the rest.

Ros. SOL.: Yes, yes.

NAT. OSIP.: Not only for the sake of your father, then, but for the sake of our enterprise as well, you must continue harmless. You must avoid any violent break in the humdrum routine of your home life. You will certainly be watched; here, not less, perhaps than at your town residence. You must shun us all, as pretty bad company. This must be your activity.

Ros. SOL.: (*Sorrowfully*) The activity of inaction.

NAT. OSIP.: But you must. The cause demands it. Not before comrade David has crossed the frontier—

Ros. SOL. : (*Aroused at last*) You are right. My silly impatience shall not endanger us all.

NAT. OSIP. : (*Compassionately*) My dear friend, it won't be thus much longer. If all goes well, in a couple of months, perhaps, you will again be free to be yourself.

Ros. SOL. : (*Assuming, by sheer force of will, the tone and manner to suit her words*) In the meantime I am as harmless and as well-behaved a butterfly girl as ever broke loose from the illustrated page of a fashionable ladies' magazine. Ha-ha-ha! (*The laugh sounds forced.*)

NAT. OSIP. : Courage, comrade, courage.

Ros. SOL. : (*As cheerfully as she can*) If I must, I must.

(*Pause.*)

NAT. OSIP. : Time I should be going, I suppose.

Ros. SOL. : Oh, no, not so soon. Stay yet a while. How are your folks?

NAT. OSIP. : Thank you.

Ros. SOL. : How is your brother? I hope I do not touch a sore spot now. He has reformed, hasn't he? No? Why, Phineas Abraamovich seems to be quite delighted with him. These are his own words: "Prompt, punctual, and reliable."

NAT. OSIP. : Phineas Abraamovich is very kind, I am sure.

Ros. SOL. : It was not mere conventionality, believe me. The good old man intends to promote him, make him his general manager or some such thing. He has full trust in him. He said as much in my hearing.

NAT. OSIP. : (*Taking up her hat and otherwise trying not to look at Ros. SOL.*) Then he does not know my brother.

Wait till it gets cooler. People will be returning to town. George will again have his boon companions. (*Awkward pause. Natalya Osipovna puts on her hat.*)

Ros. SOL.: One moment, please. I'll just run up into the house to fetch my things. I'll be back directly. (*Gathers up the music, and runs playfully to the house. On the porch she faces about.*) Just a minute, dear.

NAT. OSIP.: Poor parents. Know you what disasters lie in wait for you? Who will be the first to bring sorrow into your lives—George, with his cards, wine, and debauchery, or I? He, that libertine of a son, who has shaken himself free of all principles, or I, struggling for the principle of liberty? Poor mother, and poor father. I, at least, shall not disgrace you. I shall give you no cause to hide your faces in shame. Openly and proudly shall you meet the gaze of all, as so many heart-broken parents of our comrades have done before you, and so many more will do after you; as poor Rosalie's father may have to do some of these days. And she *so young!* Poor girl! My poor, brave friend! How she must suffer! Haven't I lived it all through? The impatience, the thirst for activity; the grief for parents, for beloved ones. I have gone through it all, all. Ah, that terrible struggle. Happy are they that can afford convents and prayers, and have Heaven for their reward. Our convent is our hapless country; our prayer, a ceaseless activity among its poor, oppressed people—as ceaseless as is limitless their suffering, and as intense as is their pain—and our reward? The prison, Siberia, the gallows. Poor, down-trodden Russia. How long, oh Lord, how long! But it's coming. It is coming, coming, coming. It cannot be otherwise. Tyranny must yield to Liberty.

SOL. Is. : (*Walks slowly, lost in thought; on looking up he notices Natalya Osipovna.*) Ah! Natalya Osipovna.

NAT. OSIP. : (*Quickly turning*) Oh, Solomon Isaacovich.

SOL. IS. : (*Bowing*) Good day.

NAT. OSIP. : (*Bowing*) Good day and good-bye.

SOL. IS. : Are you going? Where is Rosalie?

NAT. OSIP. : In the house, Solomon Isaacovich. She will be here directly. There she is.

Ros. SOL. : (*Hatted, with parasol in gloved hand, coming towards them almost at a run*) Sir, I have the honor to introduce to you the unknown stranger, our greatly esteemed Mademoiselle Retvinskaya. Oh, papa, give her a good scolding for coming to see us so rarely. Please do.

SOL. IS. : (*Patting her*) Haven't I you to chide, child? Seriously, Natalya Osipovna, you have been rather chary of your visits lately. Haven't you two quarreled? (*Smiling at his own poor guess.*)

Ros. SOL. : Quarreled? Ha-ha-ha! (*Embraces Natalya Osipovna*) Quarreled, indeed! Just imagine, papa, she claims— But have you read the "Viestnik Yevropy"—I mean of this month? No? I should have known as much. He reads Shakespeare, you see. It's *his* latest. Oh, what's the use! Come, Natalya Osipovna.

SOL. IS. : Where are you going? Not about your charities, I hope.

Ros. SOL. : (*Saucily*) And suppose I am.

SOL. IS. : The sun is setting; it will soon be dark.

Ros. SOL. : The more reason, then, to go where they need light.

SOL. IS. : (*Smiling*) Can my little girl supply it?

Ros. SOL. : Well, if not light, there is at least some good cheer here and here (*pointing at the things on the table and at the trunk*).

SOL. Is. : But is there a demand for it?

Ros. SOL. : Oh, yes, papa ; yes !

SOL. Is. : Then may the supply never be exhausted.

Ros. SOL. : No, sir ; say rather, May the demand cease !

SOL. Is. : I tell you this can never be, you dreamer.

Ros. SOL. : And I tell you, papa, it can be, and will be, if only (*looking at him quizzically*) the law of supply and demand be properly applied. (*Taking Natalie's arm.*) Now let us go.

(*Natalya Osipovna and Sol. Isaacovich bowing ; he gazes after them as they retreat.*)

Ros. SOL. : (*Looking back over her shoulder*) Now, sir, ponder it well. Ha-ha-ha ! (*She pulls Natalie forward, as if the latter is not walking fast enough, and then adds, looking back to Solomon Herzfarb*) I'll just see her down the road a bit, papa. Meanwhile, ponder it well, sir. (*Waves him an adieu.*)

(*Exeunt Natalya and Rosalie through the passage leading to the street.*)

SOL. Is. : What a wonder-working magician the human heart can be, if only itself is pure and loving, and undisturbed and not embittered. The dear child ; the very law of supply and demand, she re-edits into a lever of salvation. Only apply it properly. Pro-op-oper-ly ? You innocent child. Your studies in economics have profited you but little. Oh, she knows all about it ; no vexing questions for her. In the gladness of her youth she is proof against them all. (*Contemplating the things on the table.*) A shawl,

stockings, needles, soap, salves, even ribbons, even tobacco and a pouch. To be sure, the poor need luxuries as well. And what is this? Ah, a New Testament. A Jewish prayer-book. Edification and solace for the soul. Woe's me, we all need this; poor and rich alike. And what are these? A B C's. Reading books. An arithmetic—food for the mind. Nothing wanting. All things for all men. So clear, so plain. My dear, dear child. I envy you. That's good. A father envying his own child. Envious of his own happiness. The Talmud says—

(*Enters Esther through the door on the porch.*)

ESTHER: (*In a flurry*) I ask you, Solomon, must I go mad? What shall we do? What can we do? Hardly had she opened her eyes, give her a letter. She must have a letter. Order one at the post-office for her.

SOL. IS.: Gently, sister, gently. You only grieve mother the more.

ESTHER: Then you speak to her. I have no more patience. "Have you slept well?" I ask. "Are you rested?" I try to speak of this and that—it's of no use. She must have a letter. As though I would not gladly give half my life to get a letter from him. As though mine were a heart of stone, and I did not feel our misfortune.

SOL. IS.: There, there, now, Esther. Can't you have a little more patience? Hush. I see mother coming. Hush.

(*Enter Miriam through the same door.*)

MIRIAM: (*With gentle reproach*) Ai-ai-ai, Esther. Must you grieve Solomon too? I really did not mean to vex you. I only asked for the letter. It has been due these five weeks. What harm have I done, my children?

SOL. IS.: Believe me, mother, there is no letter.

MIRIAM: How can that be? Oh, something has happened to my poor boy.

SOL. IS.: Nothing has happened to David, believe me, mother.

(Enters Masha.)

(*She comes through the door on the servants' porch. Busies herself with packing away the things into the trunk; when through, she locks it up.*)

MIRIAM: How do you know? Oh, there is a letter. You have read it. There is bad news. You only want to spare me, I know. (Wringing her hands.) Be a good son, Solomon; take pity on your mother.

SOL. IS.: Upon my word, mother, I tell you the truth. There is absolutely—that is (*in explanation of the tall word "absolutely"*) there is really no cause for anxiety—really none. The Siberian mail has not arrived; that's all. If anything did happen, it must have been some accident to the carriers on the road.

MIRIAM: Not to my Dovidel?

SOL. IS.: Of course not. Why should you at all entertain these gloomy thoughts?

MIRIAM: May Heaven hear you, my son.

SOL. IS.: Try not to think of it, mother. I promise you, the first thing in the morning, to send a special messenger to town, to make inquiries at the post-office. But you must promise me in return to be reasonable. Suppose there is no letter—

MIRIAM } Be it not uttered in an evil hour!

and } Be it not uttered in an evil hour! Did you  
ESTHER: } ever hear a person speak so thoughtlessly?

SOL. IS.: —what then? Such things happen. You

yourself know the irregularity of the post, especially of the Siberian line.

MIRIAM: But you will send a messenger?

SOL. IS.: I have promised you, mother.

MASHA: (*To Esther*) Here is the key, ma-am; or shall I keep it?

ESTHER: Keep it. Don't bother me.

(*Exit Masha.*)

MIRIAM: Send old Ivan the Grumbler. He is trustworthy.

ESTHER: The old fool? Anybody would do the errand better. He won't be back in a year, I tell you. The slow, crawling crab. I'll send Moysheh instead. He'll get there like wild-fire—in a minute.

SOL. IS.: Are you satisfied now, mother?

MIRIAM: You are kind, Solomon. Esther, first thing in the morning. Don't forget. Of course, it's so. Simply the mail has not arrived. Couldn't you (*to Esther*) have said as much? You have given me new hope, my son. Ah, where is the child?

SOL. IS.: Natalya Osipovna was to see her.

MIRIAM: Eh? The Major's daughter.

SOL. IS.: (*Nodding in reply*).

ESTHER: So, she was here? When? Did she stay long? And where was I, pray? By way of surprise, we have a caller once in a great while, and I am sure to miss her. What was her hurry, I wonder. Couldn't you detain her? It's a pleasure to speak to her.

SOL. IS.: You will have a better chance another time.

ESTHER: Much do you care. "Another time," indeed. And I tell you, Solomon, people will soon stop calling on us

altogether. That's the kind of a father he is. Shuts up his own child, as a miser his money, and thinks he is doing his duty.

MIRIAM: Be reasonable, Esther.

ESTHER: Yes, "be reasonable." Why isn't he reasonable? Did you ever hear the like of it! "A child must not be interfered with!" Only "reason with her!" Oh-oh-oh. Were Sarahleh alive—may she rest in peace!—she would know what is due to us in our social station in life. Poor Rosalie. A child must be directed, guided, taught to obey. "Reason with her!" Poor, motherless Rosalie!

(*Miriam and Esther sigh.*)

(*A fumbling at the gate is heard, and is followed by a hard fit of suppressed coughing. All three look up in surprise.*)

ESTHER: Masha! Bella! Sarah! A houseful of servants and none within call.

SOL. IS.: Who may that be?

ESTHER: Some beggar, surely. As if they don't get enough on Fridays.

MIRIAM: Perhaps it is one of Rosalie's poor. The child will be grieved to learn that one such was refused admission. See, Solomon, who is at the gate.

SOL. IS.: (*At the gate*) Whom do you wish to see, Rab' neighbor? Me?

(*Another fit of coughing is heard.*)

SOL. IS.: (*In kindlier tones, while opening the gate*) Come in. Rest a while. Don't fear. You are among Jews.

(*An old man's voice*): May God prolong your life!

SOL. IS.: Come in, come in, Rab' neighbor!

(Enters Mordecai.)

(He is very old and leans on his cane for support. He is dressed in the fashion of the poorer class of the religious Jews, in a long coat, his Sabbath best; a big, red checkered handkerchief protrudes from the hip-pocket of his coat. He wears the usual Russian cap, with a big top and big black peak; under this a shabby skull-cap. His walking cane is of cheap manufacture. As he steps in, he bows respectfully several times. Solomon Isaacovich shuts the gate.)

MORD. : May Heaven prosper you, Rabbi Solomon. The richest merchant in town, and wise student of the Law—and himself opened the gate for a poor old man. May the Gate of Heaven be opened unto you as readily at the close of a long, and prosperous, and happy life! (A fit of coughing of lesser duration and violence.)

ESTHER and MIRIAM : (Softly) Amen!

SOL. Is. : (Offering him a chair) Be seated, Rab' neighbor, and tell me what brings you here.

MORD. : (Bowing, but refusing the offered chair) I did not mean to disturb you, Rab' Solomon. I really did not. I was waiting at the gate for somebody to come out. Only that bad cough, a whiff of wind raised the dust, and I had to catch at something for support, and the gate shook. But I didn't mean to disturb you. I could wait. Don't be angry with me. Please, Rab' Solomon.

SOL. Is. : Oh, no, no. Heaven forbid, I am not at all angry. I am ready to listen to you.

MORD. : May Heaven bless you. (Noticing the women, he takes off his top-cap; remains in his skull-cap, and bows

*to the ladies, low and respectfully.)* Woe is me! What have I come to! I am no beggar.

SOL. IS.: (*Encouragingly*) I have not taken you for one.

MORD.: For as it is written: "In the sweat of thy brow thou shalt eat thy bread."

SOL. IS.: Certainly. And what is your occupation?

MORD.: A tailor, Rab' Solomon. Mordecai the tailor. The very infants of the neighborhood know me. You don't know me. But I know you. He-he-he! (*Laughs softly and with satisfaction.*) As who does not know Rab' Shloymeleh, Solomon Isaacovich Herzfarb, the richest merchant in Ensk. (*Declaiming, as if giving him a formal introduction.*)

SOL. IS.: I wish I knew myself.

MORD.: But I can't work much now So help me God, I can't. My working days have passed. So help me God, they have. I may swear it to you. By my children and children's children, I swear it. I speak the truth. Believe me, Rab' Solomon, believe me. (*Coughs a little.*)

SOL. IS.: (*Amazed*) Why! Why! my good man. I do not doubt you at all.

MORD.: (*With a sigh of relief*) For aren't you a Jew, yourself? And one Jew feels for another—be they ever so far apart, the "Sons Merciful."

ESTHER: (*To Solomon*) One of Rosalie's poor, I guess.

SOL. IS.: No.

ESTHER: No? What does he want, then?

MORD.: (*Bows again*).

SOL. IS.: He has come to me.

MORD.: Not to beg, madame, not to beg. Only to bor-

row a little money. To borrow, not to beg. With God's help, I shall pay it back, little by little.

SOL. Is. : (*Smiles*).

ESTHER: (*Laughs outright, but good-naturedly*) And on what pledge, pray, shall you be advanced the money? Upon the pawn of your walking cane, perhaps? Ha-ha-ha! That's fine! Go now into the banking business, Solomon—and God speed you. You will have fine customers.

MORD. : (*In dismay to Solomon*) Woe is me. The lady—may she be spared all worriment—may indeed laugh. I have no better pledge to offer than this here cane. (*Grasping the cane more firmly and resting on it more heavily, with head bent low, sighs deeply, in utter dejection.*) All else is in the pawn shop.

MIRIAM: (*Reproachfully*) Ai-ai-ai, Esther.

SOL. Is. : Nor could you part from it (*pointing at the cane*), I fear.

(*A pause. Esther, a little confused, fumbles aimlessly with her fingers. Miriam looks expectantly at Solomon, who gazes fixedly at the staff as if some evasive idea is unsuccessfully struggling into his consciousness.*)

SOL. Is. : And would you, my good sister (*still gazing at the cane*), take from an old man his staff?

ESTHER: Gracious now. Just look at them! What a tumult about a word said in jest.

SOL. Is. : But would you?

ESTHER: "Would you?" "Would you?" What do you take me for? Am I a godless heathen of a Christian to deprive an old man of his last support, his only comfort?

(Another pause. Miriam is still watching Solomon. Esther, having risen from her seat, looks angrily at the old man as the cause of her displeasure, but relents gradually. Mordecai, frightened by the little scene, trembles in apprehension of the disastrous effect that it may have upon the purpose of his visit. Solomon Isaacovich starts at the word "comfort," as if suddenly awakened, looks up, gazes at Esther with intense expectation, as if hoping to intercept on her face the evasive idea, and then, swayed by a sudden rush of thought, he starts to move about the stage, but checks himself after a few steps.)

SOL. IS.: Oh! (*Shakes his head slowly, then quoting*) "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me." (Pause. *He is obviously satisfied with having caught the evasive idea; smiles, but continues absorbed in thought.*) Verily, "Thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me." (Pause.) Strange, that I should think of this now. Oh, I see. Our friends, the Christians, have taken from us both the "rod" and the "staff." What have they given us in return? Nothing. Nothing at all. Only that? Ah! confound it. The Bible and politics; what have these in common? (*Shrugs his shoulders in disgust; then returns resolutely to the conversation.*)

ESTHER: Really, Solomon, I meant no harm.

SOL. IS.: Of course not, my good Esther. Don't mind my walking a bit.

ESTHER: And brooding.

SOL. IS.: And brooding.

ESTHER: And being troubled. Ah, you have been this way ever since the morning. Have I no eyes to see with?

MIRIAM: (*Anxiously and hurriedly*) What do you say? Why are you troubled, my son? Why?

SOL. IS.: (*Impatiently and rather annoyed*) Oh, nothing, mother. It is indeed nothing; only a bit of holy scripture—really nothing worse.

MIRIAM: (*Incredulous*) Holy Scripture?

SOL. IS.: Well, mother, you see our sages explain that the sacred law is to the pious as the walking-cane to the weary wanderer, a support and comfort. And I just happened to think of it.

MIRIAM: Yes, my son. Blessed be our sages—their memories for a blessing! Solomon (*beckoning to him to approach*).

SOL. IS.: Yes, mother.

MIRIAM: (*Whispering into his ear*) Be kind to this poor man for Dovidel's sake. Help him, if you can.

SOL. IS.: Certainly. Well, Rab' Mordecai, let us talk business. Name your sum, and if it is not too large, and you agree to all my terms—I am very exacting, Mister Mordecai—you shall have the money, if only to prove that a Jew must needs be a usurer, as the Messrs. Anti-Semites claim. I mean (*in explanation of the foreign-sounding terms*) that the enemies of Israel say that we are money lenders. If, however, a Jew dies without ever having been a usurer—well, well—that only goes to prove that a Jew will do anything to disconcert a Christian.

MORD.: (*Beaming, gives vent to his gratitude, with a plunge*) Oh, may the Almighty Father in Heaven bless you, and all that are dear to you. May he gladden you with his

favors as you have gladdened my heart. Didn't I know it would end thus—in joy and gladness. My heart kept on urging me. "Appeal to Rab' Shloymeleh, appeal to him. They are a Jewish family. They have Jewish hearts. They won't refuse," it said, my heart said, and I, the old fool, wouldn't believe it. My own heart I doubted. But the voice within me, the blessed voice, kept on urging me, "Go!" and "GO!" And I went, but I kept it all to myself, lest they laugh me to scorn and call me fool in my old age. And here I am, and entreat you. Have pity! (*Overcomes an approaching fit of coughing.*) Have pity upon a helpless old man. May Heaven——(*coughs*).

SOL. IS.: But, my good man, tell us first what is your trouble, and how much you need. Be composed and speak quietly.

MORD.: This I will—may God bless you!—this I will. To begin, then, at the beginning, when the Blow struck us——

SOL. IS.: You mean the Decision of the Senate?

MORD.: The same; the ukase—may the memory of it be wiped off the face of the earth!

SOL. IS.: Tut-tut-tut, my good Rab' Mordecai! You must be grateful. They mean it all in parental kindness, in Christian love.

MORD.: (*Fervently*) Mayest thou, sweet Father in Heaven, receive them in like kindness and with like love, the godless heathens! May their lives be as embittered and as blasted as they have embittered and blasted ours.

SOL. IS.: Beware, Rab' Mordecai, one must obey the laws.

MORD.: Ah, Rab' Shloymeleh, it is easy enough for you

to speak thus—may yours, barring its drawbacks, be the allotted portion of all the children in Israel. You can afford a round, fat heap of coins, and shove it into his grabbing paw, and the godless dog of a chief is yours. Plain sailing! But I am a poor man. Oh, mock me not in my misery, please.

SOL. Is.: You are right, Rab' Mordecai. My mocking you is as sinful as it is out of place. But I was mocking myself as well. For, am I not a Jew, as well as you? And “All Jews are brethren” has not been said in vain—at least not for me. As it stands written—you are read some in the “minute print,” aren’t you?—“I also, oh Lord, here am I——”

SOL. Is. and MORD.: (*Finishing together*) “I answer if thou callest to me.”

SOL. Is.: But what has the ukase to do with you? Surely, you own no “factories, mills, shops, or other such-like manufacturing establishments.” Or have your tailor’s bench and needle and thread suddenly grown to a factory?

MORD.: As if his vulture eyes—may they burst out of their sockets!—could overlook even a pin in a crevice, the dog of a district chief! Still he is a loggerhead, the heathenish pig. How nicely have I got round him. He demanded five rubles down, and a ruble and a half a month. But I haggled and haggled. “I cannot work, your worship of noble birth,” I pleaded. He wouldn’t listen to me; he wouldn’t believe me. “You lie, you lazy Jew!” he swore and cursed. But in the end he had to accept only three, may he be choked, the dog among dogs.

SOL. Is.: So, he did accept the bribe?

MORD.: Oh, he is not as insatiable as others. He is rea-

sonable. He will curse a little, call you this and that, or strike one a bit—never in the face, though, only in the chest—but he is reasonable, unless, of course, one shows him disrespect.

SOL. Is. : And your needle and thread shall henceforth not be considered a factory, nor a mill, nor a——. Oh, Rab' Mordecai, I am really not mocking you——

MORD. : Ai, ai! I should not mind if you did. I have to pay him a ruble and a half a month—and times are bad enough, as it is. Everybody is being chased out. Oh, the accursed ukase. People will be ruined. Homes will be broken up. The well-to-do of to-day will be the beggars to-morrow. And they will fight and struggle and choke as the fish out of the water, and they will tear the crumbs from one another's mouth; from the mouths of their fellow-men will they tear it.

(*Miriam and Esther sigh.*)

SOL. Is. : How long, oh Lord, how long!

MORD. : And where will I get my bread now? The place deserted; my kind neighbors gone. Here have I lived; from here I hoped to go when my time came.

SOL. Is. : For pity's sake, let us talk business. You have paid the three rubles yourself, I understand.

MORD. : Yes, Rab' Shloymeleh. Took some pillows and clothes to the pawn shop, and paid.

SOL. Is. : Now you want me to pay your district chief the ruble and a half a month?

ESTHER: (*Indignant*) And will you do that, Solomon? Oh, the grabbing vulture! The insatiable leech! I tell you that rascally brigand must be denounced. If you are man at all, you must interfere.

SOL. Is.                    Oh, Esther.

and        (*Together*)

MORD. :                   Oh, madame! (*In despair and wringing his hands.*)

(*Solomon Isaacovich shakes with painful agitation; he looks ghastly.*)

MIRIAM :                   God be with you, my son.

and        (*Together*)

ESTHER :                   Good heavens, Solomon, what is the matter?

SOL. Is. : (*Recovering*) Nothing, nothing. Nothing at all. Only nervousness.

ESTHER : Nervousness? Why, brother, you tremble; you look frightened. What is it?

SOL. Is. : As yourself say, fright; that's it. It's cowardice, Esther, cowardice.

ESTHER : But what are you afraid of? What have I said to frighten you?

SOL. Is. : (*Rather impatient and annoyed*) But it's nothing, I tell you. I am nervous; that's all. Simply nervous.

MIRIAM : My good son—may Heaven protect you!—why not be frank with us? If you are loath to denounce that heathen—why, don't.

SOL. Is. : (*More annoyed*) Oh, mother, I am a bit too nervous, perhaps. That's all.

MIRIAM : (*Shakes her head*).

SOL. Is. : (*Rather sharply, because of the growing annoyance and impatience*) Now, what do you two want of me? Now—now—imagine, one is all alone, all alone—in a dark cellar, with no human soul around—then the slightest

noise, the most insignificant thing, will be enough to startle one. The usual thing.

ESTHER: But you were not all alone; nor in a dark—

SOL. IS.: But don't I tell you I am too nervous! Understand, too nervous. Ah, leave it to me. I'll do all I can for this poor man, and have done with it.

ESTHER: (*Angrily*) Come into the house, mother. He is always that way. Gets ruffled before you know it.

MIRIAM: Perhaps it's his business troubles.

(*Exeunt Miriam and Esther. They go into the house.*)

MORD.: Oh, Rab' Shloymeleh, let him hang that rascal; why should you bother about him? Let the dog well alone.

SOL. IS.: (*Sharply*) What's that to you?

MORD.: (*Astonished*) Why, Rab' Shloymeleh Herz-farb, with your leave, you talk as if you were a heathen, not at all a Jew—be it not said to offend you.

SOL. IS.: Oh, I see. If I denounce that rascal, the rest will be scared like so many rats, and won't accept bribes?

MORD.: And then where shall we be? Merciful Heaven, you'll ruin the very few families that were lucky enough to escape. Are you a (*spitting energetically*) heathen of a Christian, be it not mentioned to offend you.

SOL. IS.: (*Patronizingly, in his superior wisdom*) Fear not, aged one; fear not. These representatives of the law will never refuse a bribe—never!

MORD.: But they will exact twice, three times as much. And we shall be ruined; be it not uttered in an evil hour.

SOL. IS.: Oh, is that it? Yes, yes; I see now.

MORD.: Woe is me. The Jew is in the Captivity. We must lie low, and be patient and suffer.

SOL. IS.: "We must lie low and suffer." Esther says

I am no man at all if I don't interfere. You advise, "Lie low and suffer!" And she a Jewess; you, a Jew, and I, a Jew. What a tangle! Verily, it is the blind leading the blind. (*With sudden impatience.*) Ah, but you are taking up too much of my time. What do you want me to do for you? Pay that ruble and a half monthly bribe for how long? Half a year? a year?

MORD. : (*Frightened, and bowing*) Forgive me, Rab'—

SOL. IS. : Speak to the point.

MORD. : I can pay that myself, God willing, I'll work—

SOL. IS. : (*A little quieter*) What do you want, then?

MORD. : Woe is me. I am to be expelled altogether.

SOL. IS. : (*Astonished and interested*) You? How so?

MORD. : (*Encouraged, yet with diffidence*) May it please you—they read it at the synagogue—I mean, the clause about the age.

SOL. IS. : I have read that myself. Surely you are above sixty. You are exempt. They cannot molest you.

MORD. : (*Sorrowfully*) I am only fifty-nine. I'll be sixty, God granting it, next Passover.

SOL. IS. : Poor man. Poor old man. The ukase is explicit on that point.

MORD. : Oh, Rab' Shloymeleh Herzfarb. Be your heart softened with pity for an old man. I'll pay it back, so help me God. Little by little will I pay it.

SOL. IS. : I am sorry, my poor man. But bribing your district chief won't help you any; he is but a subordinate.

MORD. : His very words, may it please you. But he gave me the hint. "It must go higher," he said. "Twenty-five rubles," he said. At first he wanted fifty; then forty,

thirty—but would not budge from five and twenty. “Couldn’t do it for less,” he said; “upon his word of honor, as a nobleman,” he said; “not a kopeck less!”

SOL. Is.: Certainly, certainly. It must go higher, and twenty-five rubles is quite reasonable—cheap, in fact

MORD.: (*Waving his arms, in despair*) Where is one to get such a sum? Such a sum!

SOL. Is.: Business must be brisk with these gentlemen; they must be having good times. So you want me to pay the bribe for you? A bribe?

MORD.: (*Imploringly*) Oh, do so much for charity.

SOL. Is.: (*Trying to recollect something*) Do—so—much—for—charity. Why, man, the phrase sounds familiar. Here, now (*scrutinizing Mordecai*). Though not yet a Shylock, am I already provided with a Portia? Madame Fate is quite humorous, upon my word. (*Noticing Mordecai’s puzzled yet anxious look*) Oh, never mind me, aged one. That’s a little joke, as is not written in the Bible or in the Talmud, or in any other Jewish book, for that matter. So you want me “to do so much for charity”?

MORD.: Oh! (*In mute entreaty.*)

SOL. Is.: But that’s a bribe, not charity.

MORD.: Oh, save me! Save me! Don’t let an aged man be cast out of his nest. Where shall I drag my old bones now? Can I start life anew, at my age? Oh, have pity! What is twenty-five rubles to you? Heaven will repay you a hundredfold. On the Day of Judgment will it be thrown

into the scale in your favor. Have mercy! God bless you. It will be accounted you a virtue, and if my poor sinning soul be deemed worthy I shall appear before the Heavenly Judge in your favor and testify to the deed. I swear it.

SOL. Is. : Compose yourself, my good neighbor. If this bribe can help you, it shall. Here (*giving him a card upon which he writes first a few words*) take this to the office tomorrow and ask for Mr. Fishel. Will you remember, Mr. Fishel?

(*Mordecai tries to kiss Solomon's hand as he takes the card.*)

SOL. Is. : No, no, no, Rab' Mordecai. This is not at all necessary. Leave me now, please. There is the gate; it isn't locked.

MORD. : May Heaven—

SOL. Is. : Go now. Please, go; and may Heaven prosper you.

MORD. : (*Retreats towards the gate, smiling and bowing; then at the gate*) "I'll pay it back, so help me God."

(*Exit Mordecai.*)

SOL. Is. : (*Shrugs his shoulders*) A bribe? Charity? (*Shrugs his shoulders a second time.*) "It will be accounted a virtue." Here we call it corrupting the officials—the innocent lambs—and there (*looking heavenward*) a virtue. Why not? What do they up there know about politics, anyway? Here, at least, we have the Decision of the Senate, the regulations, the ukase—we read them and know exactly what is expected of us. And there? Oh, God of Abraham

and Isaac and Jacob, where is Thy Ukase? Where? Deign to let us see it, to understand it. But "the ways of Providence are inscrutable." (*Shrugs his shoulders.*) Well, if they are inscrutable, then it is useless to wear out one's brains; useless to bother and worry. Be a pig, fill your belly, and grunt to your satisfaction. A glorious mission worthy of God's own chosen people. But there must be some answer, some solution. It cannot be otherwise. "Search and thou shalt find." Find? Find what? What? What?

(CURTAIN.)

## ACT II.

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(A well appointed library in the town residence of the Herzfarbs. In the background a door leads into the ante-room and thence to the street. On the right, two doors leading to the rooms of Rosalie, Miriam, etc.; on the left, a door to the dining room, kitchen, etc. In the same wall, further back, an old-fashioned Russian fireplace (with no mantle-piece); leaning against its little iron door are tongs, a poker, etc. On the walls, a number of portraits of renowned statesmen, scientists, philosophers, mostly Jewish. Books in good bindings on shelves behind glass doors; also, books in cheaper bindings, pamphlets, magazines, etc., on open shelves. Plenty of indications that the books are actually in use. A sofa, a desk, two tables—one much smaller and of cheaper make than the other—and a number of armchairs; also, a solid, plain wooden chair, on three legs, serves instead of a ladder to reach the top shelves.)

SOL. Is.: (*Examining his black silk skull-cap*) Plainly the long and short of it is, "Love thy neighbor as thyself." H'm! H'm! (*Puts on his skull-cap.*) Yes, of course. As a commercial proposition, it is very sensible—very. As a principle of policy to guide the statesman—why, it is simply excellent: as witness our most modern fortresses and battleships, armies and navies for gentle emissaries of that neighborly love, with their cannon and projectiles to accentuate

its endearments. . . . Upon my word, the Old Testament wasn't at all framed after modern business. The idea! To carry in stock an article nobody wants. Utterly un-Jewish, isn't it? And you, oh! great Hillel Ha-Zaken, saintly sage in Israel, you understood that. To correct the defect, you lowered the standard, and taught us that "Whatever is hateful to thee, do not unto thy fellow-men." Exactly. The nearer to earth, the further from heaven. To increase the demand you cheapened the goods. Quite reasonable. Like a practical Jew you cut the pattern to fit us, instead of trying to make us fit the pattern. Accordingly, you undertook to teach man the Law, all the sacred Law, in as short a time as one could stand on one leg. An unparalleled audacity verging on impiety, since to strip truth naked one needs courage. Yet you succeeded—which was genius. The Ten Commandments with their six hundred and thirteen accompaniments you managed to focus in this one center of dazzling light—which was both genius and wisdom; the genius of man and the wisdom of the Jew; for he who is continually on the march must have his treasures in a nut-shell to have them handy for hurried packing. Reasonable, practical, and, above all, businesslike. Still, the unadultered, genuine article is, doubtlessly, "Love thy neighbor as thyself." Certainly. Certainly. Only, who is thy neighbor? who, thyself? As to love—what is that, who can tell? Three stumbling blocks of perplexity in this one so innocent-looking bit of plainest doctrine! Obviously, this flesh, these bones, these perishable fetters of the spirit are not I. Any thirteen-year old schoolboy knows as much. Not the body, but the soul; not the beast in me, the man in me is I. My mind, my heart, my deeds, my honor—in a word, my manhood is I. The divine

spark in me is I. Well and good. Now comes along my neighbor—say, his Excellency of high birth, the Governor General himself—another spark, and, unquestionably, as divine as mine—and gets the administrative fit. To save the empire he tackles philology, and by special ukase ordains that I, a born Jew, shall not be called by my own name, a name that my forefathers, for generations and generations back, had borne before me, and insists, in spite of the Bible and good grammar, that Solomon is Shloymka, all of which he does partly out of sheer ugliness and partly to squeeze the Jew for a few extra rubles. To see the Jew insulted, humiliated, prostrated in the mud, does him good. The divine spark that is in him is thereby fanned into self-admiration. Is he my neighbor? He? He, that has more affection for my Jewish pocket than for his Jewish god? (*Shrugs his shoulders.*) But “love thy neighbor” thou must, though thou burst! Oh, confound it! Why should I at all bother about such insipid stupidities? Am I a beardless lad in the first flush of his youth that I must needs lay out the righteous path for myself and the world to follow? Burning questions at forty-six, when my hair is turning gray! (*Shrugs his shoulders.*) What a delicious fool I am! I simply hate myself!—That’s it. In my present mode, I can say truly that I love His Excellency the Governor General and his entire tribe of savage persecutors exactly as I love myself. Thus, the great, fundamental Law is satisfied, obeyed, and upheld, and I ought to be happy. Deep philosophy! Admirable results! Oh, how tiresome it all is! How tiresome! (*Sighs.*)

(Enters Phineas Abraamovich.)

(*He takes off his silk hat and looks for a place where to put it.*)

PHIN. AB.: I thought at first you were asleep or poring over your books. But then I heard you move about. Esther told me you were here. Why? What's the matter? Won't you shake hands with me?

SOL. IS.: You, Phineas? Glad to see you.

PHIN. AB.: You don't look it, though. Upon my word, Solomon, you make me indeed feel that "An unbidden guest is worse than a Tartar."

SOL. IS.: I am glad to see you, old man. (*Shakes hands with him and pushes him into a chair.*)

PHIN. AB.: That's better; that's the way to behave. I won't ask any questions, for don't I know you well enough for that? But you did greet me at first—guess how?

SOL. IS.: (*Trying to smile*) How?

PHIN. AB.: As if I were a ghost.

SOL. IS.: (*Smiling faintly*) That's too general. Particularize a bit.

PHIN. AB.: And a bad ghost at that.

SOL. IS.: Still too vague.

PHIN. AB.: As the ghost of an official who wanted more.

SOL. IS.: Say, rather, who wanted all, and you will have made a pretty close guess. Yes, that's about the size of it. But why talk of ghosts?

PHIN. AB.: I don't look much like one, do I? The worms—keep your cigar, you heretic; it's the Sabbath—they won't be much famished, the worms, when I am at last out of harness and packed away for good.

SOL. Is.: Eh, my dear Phineas, at times I wish I were out of harness myself. However—

PHIN. AB.: You, Solomon? You?

SOL. Is.: Why not?

PHIN. AB.: Why yes?

SOL. Is.: Because, well, because I am tired. Understand, simply tired. Isn't that reason enough?

PHIN. AB.: You tired? You? Tired of what? Of life? You?

SOL. Is.: Not exactly of life. But—ah, let us talk of something else.

PHIN. AB.: But what?

SOL. Is.: Oh, never mind.

PHIN. AB.: Still?

SOL. Is.: What's the use, Phineas? You cannot help me.

PHIN. AB.: Look here, Solomon, what yarn, excuse me, are you weaving? Surely you are not in earnest.

SOL. Is.: Thank Heaven, man. That I am not—or I would not *talk*.

PHIN. AB.: That's better, old man; that's better. But you do talk. What's the trouble, then?

SOL. Is.: You will again call me heretic.

PHIN. AB.: I should have known as much. Ah, Solomon, take the advice of an old friend and let these thoughts alone.

SOL. Is.: But they won't let me alone, man. That's where the joke comes in.

PHIN. AB.: Read the Bible, study our holy books.

SOL. Is.: That's what I do, my good friend. That's exactly what I do. For instance, is it not written "An eye for

an eye, a tooth for a tooth"? And being good business men, ought we not to improve upon the precept and look for profit?

PHIN. AB.: May His mercy save us. Hold your peace, you scoffer.

SOL. IS.: (*Smiling*) Now, Phineas, this is not fair. You have insisted I should speak; now you must hear me out.

PHIN. AB.: Then, don't joke.

SOL. IS.: Nor do I. It's Heaven that is joking, not I.

PHIN. AB.: Again! (*Claps his hands to his ears, half in earnest, half in assumed horror.*)

SOL. IS.: Also, "Love thy neighbor as thyself" is not bad doctrine, either.

PHIN. AB.: It's all the Law, all the Law. As it's written—

SOL. IS.: Precisely, my good Phineas, precisely. Now you only have to make your choice. Which? (*Holds out to him both his hands closed, as if in the act of tossing up in a game of chance.*)

PHIN. AB.: (*Puzzled*) Which?

SOL. IS.: Even so. Shall it be "A tooth for a tooth"? or—"Love thy neighbor"?

PHIN. AB.: H'm . . . h'm . . . But—h'm—h'm—one must dig deeper, so to speak; go to the very root.

SOL. IS.: I try my best.

PHIN. AB.: I mean you must not read as it is written.

SOL. IS.: Eh, beware. Now you are the heretic.

PHIN. AB.: I a heretic! Please, Solomon, let me be. I have enough to worry me.

SOL. IS.: (*Smiling*) But you are my friend. I only try to love you as myself. Heaven has hurled at us this delicious

combination of neighborly love and tooth-pulling—a huge joke, eh—and I enjoy it immensely, so I try to let you have your share of the fun.

PHIN. AB.: Very much obliged, I am sure. I am not a preacher looking for a text. Not I, thank you. I am a plain man and act according to my lights. I give to the hospital, to the "Shelter of the Stranger," the "Aid of the Needy," the "School of the Law"; as much as it has pleased the One-on-High to put in my power to give, I give—ungrudgingly. What else do you want of me? I certainly cannot give as much as you.

SOL. IS.: Come, now, my good Phineas. Don't take it so seriously. I have hurt you, I fear.

PHIN. AB.: I am as good a Jew as any; am a member of the synagogue and pay what's coming from me. I cheat nobody, rob nobody. I attend to my business and obey the Law.

SOL. IS.: From my very heart I wish I knew how to observe the Law.

PHIN. AB.: Eh, Solomon, beware. No good, I tell you, will ever come of your—hm—hm—your—

SOL. IS.: Folly? Say so frankly. In this, I fear, you are right. (*Pause; then thoughtfully*) I live too much by myself; forever alone with my thoughts.

PHIN. AB.: It's your own fault. You are not a sociable being—that's what's the matter with you.

SOL. IS.: Not so, not so. I like the society of men, even of children. But—here you are—you have called, and right glad I am to see you and I could only hurt you for your pains.

PHIN. AB.: Tut-tut-tut. Hurt me! I won't cry much,

not even to please you. But I am a horse of a different color. We must quarrel, you and I. You must have your laugh at me.

SOL. IS. : Phineas.

PHIN. AB. : I don't mind it, either ; have known you long enough, I suppose. None readier to help a fellow out of a hole, but you must have your laugh.

SOL. IS. : I was not always thus, Phineas.

PHIN. AB. : That's true, that's true. (*Shakes his head slowly; then, thoughtfully and sadly*) Fifteen years, Solomon?

SOL. IS. : Sixteen, next Passover.

PHIN. AB. : How quickly time passes! We were young then. Ah, Solomon, can't you stop thinking of that? What the earth has covered shall be forgotten.

SOL. IS. : I try, I try. But how can I forget? Fifteen years have passed since then. But was there one single day in these fifteen long years that did not remind me of the horrors of that hour? Every new regulation against the Jew reminds me of it. Every petty bit of persecution reminds me of it. Every Anti-Semitic article tears the wound open. Forget? I wish to God I could.

PHIN. AB. : As I say, Solomon, you ought to see people more. At least, attend at the synagogue; you will meet there all sorts, strangers, and acquaintances. Hear the news, have a chat, and "Good Sabbath, fare ye well!"

SOL. IS. : (*Sadly*) I have tried it more than once, but somehow it doesn't work.

PHIN. AB. : You have yourself to blame! You take things too much to heart. People don't like to be called down for each little thing. Besides, the Sabbath has been given

us for rest, not for worry. And you would have everybody worry about things even more than about business. You would make a terrible preacher, I tell you, not to be trifled with. It would be fire and brimstone for us sinners all the time.

SOL. Is. : (*Smiling*) I am more inclined to laugh, by your own attestation.

PHIN. AB. : (*Shrugs his shoulders*) As who can make you out. You are a strange man.

SOL. Is. : And not over much to your liking. Confess, Phineas.

PHIN. AB. : I wish you were what you used to be.

SOL. Is. : So do I, so do I. As who would refuse to enter Heaven? Only, my sins won't let me. But no more of this, old man. No more. Speak of yourself, your family. Come, now. How's Hannale? How are the children?

PHIN. AB. : All are well, thank you.

SOL. Is. : How is business?

PHIN. AB. : That's all right, too, I suppose.

SOL. Is. : You suppose?

PHIN. AB. : The fact is, you see, I need your advice.

SOL. Is. : Speak away.

PHIN. AB. : And your help, if it won't be too hard for you.

SOL. Is. : (*Anxiously*) Help? You are not embarrassed, I hope. The Decision of the Senate did not hurt you?

PHIN. AB. : Me? No. How could it? Our office and warehouse are within the city limits. Besides, I employ enough Christians to satisfy even this Decision.

SOL. Is. : As for me, I will not employ a single Russian. I'll discharge them all.

PHIN. AB.: How can you? The Jews are all to be expelled before February. Many have already moved.

SOL. IS.: I move with them.

PHIN. AB.: What do you mean? You are a merchant of the first guild. You are exempt.

SOL. IS.: But I am a Jew, and I do not want to be exempt. I go with them. This town is within the pale, as yet. I will move all my plants to town.

PHIN. AB.: Ah, goodness, Solomon, are you mad?

SOL. IS.: Perhaps.

PHIN. AB.: Only think of the cost! Why, it will run up into the thousands——

SOL. IS.: Precisely, Phineas, precisely. But every ruble I'll lose will cost them ten.

PHIN. AB.: Them? Whom?

SOL. IS.: My neighborly Christians, Phineas; them, who rubbed their hands with glee in delightful expectation of the higher rents and better terms they will now be able to squeeze out of the Jew, and them, too, of the poorer class, who are willing to take the job that the Jew is forced to quit. Are they, over there, at St. Petersburg, managing my business for me? Will they prescribe for me whom I shall employ?

PHIN. AB.: But that's the Law.

SOL. IS.: The law! The law! For thirty years have I toiled and moiled ceaselessly and perseveringly. By my own efforts have I developed an industry that was all but unknown here in my boyhood. The forest lands that a shiftless and lazy nobility would let rot have I redeemed from utter ruin. While they were wasting their time and substance at the gaming table, in drink and sport, I toiled on, hardly

knowing rest. I have enriched the neighborhood, and now I am denied even the right to say how many Jews I shall employ in my own business, or in what capacity I shall employ them. In my own business! Upon my own property!

PHIN. AB.: But you know the Decision of the Senate. The village has been declared outside the pale.

SOL. IS.: Therefore I must ask a man his creed if I want to employ him? Not his trade, his ability, intelligence, skill, honesty, steadiness, sobriety?

PHIN. AB.: (*Bewildered*) Why, man—but that's the law.

SOL. IS.: And I, a Jew, must give the preference to a Christian as the superior being because that's the law? And every time I do so I must myself admit my own inferiority because that's the law?

PHIN. AB.: God protect you, Solomon. But that is the law.

SOL. IS.: Then cursed be I if I submit. Shylock was, at least, spat upon by others; and here I am required to spit in my own face. And this their Christian justice, this the quality of their mercy!

PHIN. AB.: Woe's me, Solomon, listen to reason. The ukase was not meant for you alone. Why should you be the exception? You are not the first one, nor the last one.

SOL. IS.: And why, pray? Why? Because our is a nation of slaves, of cowardly slaves. Whipped with the knout, we kiss the whipping hand; with the oppressor's foot upon our necks we know only to bite the dust. Have these centuries of barbaric persecution purged us clear of all manly resistance? Are we but rags to be trampled into the mire?

Not I, by God, not I. Do you expect me to see my working men driven out of my mills, my yards, driven out against my will and for no other reason than that they are of the same nation with me, believe in the same God with me, in the same Father, not in His Son—my own people forced into idleness, their homes ruined; their wives and babies shelterless, homeless, starving—and I, a Jew, am ordered to fill their places with members of that very same race that persecutes them, and robs them, and humiliates them. . . . Phineas, Phineas, man, do you comprehend the diabolical cruelty of it all? Could hell itself invent anything more monstrous, more hideous? Were the Almighty God himself to come down—oh, no, no, no! I must not blaspheme thus!—this monstrosity of iniquity is not of God, it's of Satan, of Satan. How can we submit, Phineas? How? Cursed be I, if I'll give one Christian the job that the ukase has wrenched out of the hands of a Jew. I move my plants to town, and henceforth will I employ Jews only and exclusively. Nor shall I give any longer to the Christian Hospital, Orphanage, Refuge, schools. I withdraw every one of my subscriptions, and every kopeck that I can spare will go now to help these very same expelled Jews. Don't you fear. They'll find in me a hard fighter. And before I ruin myself I'll turn that village into a howling wilderness. It took me thirty years to build it up; I'll ruin it in as many months. Ah, if we only would strike back, and strike with all our might—this infernal persecution would stop in a hurry! It would, Phineas, it would. . . . I shall not wait for others to set me the example. You call me preacher. You are right, man. I have been preaching too long. It's time to be up and doing.

PHIN. AB.: (*Shaking his head slowly*) Woe's me, Solomon, what may that lead to?

SOL. IS.: To whatever it pleases. One doesn't live twice, and I am not going to waste my life for nothing.

PHIN. AB.: Don't invite trouble, Solomon. I mean well by you.

SOL. IS.: I know it.

PHIN. AB.: Then listen to me. Don't borrow trouble. Take my advice.

SOL. IS.: Thanks.

PHIN. AB.: Ah, you are stubborn

SOL. IS.: Then waste no words on me. Speak of your own affairs, and if I can help you, I will.

PHIN. AB.: I know it. You have always been a true friend.

SOL. IS.: You don't know it at all. I'll try to help you not because you are my friend—this is a different consideration and entirely irrelevant—but because you are a Jew.

PHIN. AB.: Because I am a Jew?

SOL. IS.: Even so.

PHIN. AB.: That's something new.

SOL. IS.: So is the Decision of the Senate, Phineas; so are the regulation of '92, and even those of '82.

PHIN. AB.: Even of '82? These, at least, are too old to be new.

SOL. IS.: And I tell you they are too new to be old; I say it, and so I feel it.

PHIN. AB.: Ah, the Decision has hit you hard, my poor Solomon.

SOL. IS.: Hit me? I'll hit them harder, you may be sure.

But—akh, I am tired of it. Listen, Phineas, tell me your troubles, and—

PHIN. AB.: Clear out, eh?

SOL. IS.: No, no, old man. I meant if you need money draw on me—all I can.

PHIN. AB.: It's money, of course; but not quite in that sense. You see—but this is strictly confidential.

SOL. IS.: I understand.

PHIN. AB.: Not a word about it to a living soul, or it may indeed embarrass me. Besides, a man's honor may get involved; we must be very careful.

SOL. IS.: That's indeed becoming rather interesting. Drop your mysterious air, though.

PHIN. AB.: I have noticed of late—Grigory Osipovich, you know, is an honorable man and comes of a good family. Nor did I make him cashier before I—

SOL. IS.: Has he robbed you?

PHIN. AB.: I haven't said that; I haven't said that. Only—

SOL. IS.: Only?

PHIN. AB.: The books, you see—there is some hitch in the books. I am something of a bookkeeper myself, but I would rather not take all the responsibility.

SOL. IS.: And you suspect young Retvinsky?

PHIN. AB.: I suspect nobody; nobody in particular, and everybody generally. But I can't let things go on in this way.

SOL. IS.: Certainly not. What's your plan?

PHIN. AB.: So, I thought to myself—Herr Fishel is reputed an expert accountant—

SOL. IS.: And so he is.

PHIN. AB.: You are an expert yourself; you ought to know.

SOL. IS.: I tell you he is just the man to tackle such a job as this. Take my word for it. Nothing will escape his scrutiny.

PHIN. AB.: Will you let him do it for me?

SOL. IS.: What a question! I'll ask him myself.

PHIN. AB.: I mean can you spare him? It may take a couple of weeks.

SOL. IS.: It isn't as bad as all that, is it? Besides, Herr Fishel is no sluggard. He won't need so much time.

PHIN. AB.: But can you spare him?

SOL. IS.: I can, I can, don't worry.

PHIN. AB.: Is he reliable? I mean the affair must not be suffered to leak out.

SOL. IS.: No fear; he can hold his tongue.

PHIN. AB.: It's settled then?

SOL. IS.: It is settled.

PHIN. AB.: Will you speak to him?

SOL. IS.: I will.

PHIN. AB.: Thank you.

SOL. IS.: Leave that for later.

PHIN. AB.: Yes, it's a burden off my shoulder.

SOL. IS.: Glad to hear it.

PHIN. AB.: Now, look here, Solomon, I know you; you want me to go now.

SOL. IS.: Do not be angry with me, old man.

PHIN. AB.: Oh, I don't mind it. You are a big crank. That's all. But if you don't pay me a visit within two weeks, I'll . . . call again.

SOL. Is.: (*Feelingly*) Thank you, my dear Phineas.  
(*They shake hands.*)

PHIN. AB.: Good Sabbath.

SOL. IS.: Good-day, I'll speak to Herr Fishel.

PHIN. AB.: All right. But don't forget.

SOL. IS.: I won't.

(*Exit Phineas.*)

ESTHER: (*In the doorway, on the left*) Here, Masha, you slow thing. Here, this is the dining room now. Don't you understand? He wills it so.

(*Enters Masha.*)

(*She carries a tray; on the tray, fruit, a glass of tea, a sugar bowl, etc.*)

ESTHER: Place the tray here.

SOL. IS.: Not on the desk, sister.

ESTHER: (*To Masha*) Not on the desk. Of course not. Your books—not here, you muddle-head; put the tray there, lest his books be spoiled by mishap. Ah's me. He cares more for his books than for himself. Go now. Mind the samovar, and—here—be within call.

(*Exit Masha.*)

Ah, what fine pears! What luscious grapes! Sweet as sugar. Have some, Solomon. You will relish them. I have picked them out myself. Indeed, I have.

SOL. IS.: (*Taking a cigar from the open box*) I had enough at dinner; I haven't asked for more. (*Lights his cigar.*)

ESTHER: Much did you eat at dinner. "I had enough, enough!" Confess, rather, you are doing penance, are bent upon fasting or starving yourself into illness—be it not uttered in an evil hour. Did you ever hear the like of it!

A library for a dining room, tea and tobacco for meals, and books and papers for a relishing dish. Woe's me, Solomon. Look at yourself. What's the use of wearing one's self out so! Have something. Look at these peaches. Just look! Or, will you have some fresh cream? Ah, what cream! Masha! Masha!

MASHA: (*in the doorway*) Yes, ma'am.

ESTHER: Tell Sarah the maid, down in the cellar, in the smaller ice tank, in the corner——

SOL. Is.: But, Esther, I don't want any cream, nor anything else. Indeed, I don't.

ESTHER: (*To Masha*) Shut the door. (*She busies herself with the fruit on the tray.*) Please, be not impatient with me. Am I your enemy? Truly, I mean you no harm. Your health is my care. You are a clever man, brother, and learned. But on steam and smoke alone one cannot live. Why should you kill yourself? Be it not uttered in an evil hour!

SOL. Is.: (*Impatiently*) Yes; of course.

ESTHER: Poor mother, poor aged mother, has enough to bear—may we not be punished for the sinful murmurings—enough grief in her aching heart, and she can hardly move about. Who, then, shall take care of you? Surely not dear Rosalie. For ever——

SOL. Is.: Please, Esther.

ESTHER: —busy with her poor, her charities, and studies, the dear child hasn't a moment to spare for you or me or even herself. A fine caretaker would she make. She is clever, eh? and learned? And I tell you, Solomon, she is but a child. Now, would you burden her——

SOL. Is. : Please, Esther, you know well enough I have no such intentions.

ESTHER : And why should you have them? The idea! Care and worry seem to shun the dear child. Would you mar her happiness? Not you, I know. May Heaven bless her, our sweet little dove, it is a joy to see her. So happy, and laughing, and gay. Mirthful like a lark.

SOL. Is. : (*Shaking his head slowly*) Woe's me. Her mirth isn't much to my liking.

ESTHER : Woe's me. What do you mean? Has anything happened to the child?

SOL. Is. : Nothing. Nothing that you need be anxious about.

ESTHER : How you have frightened me!

SOL. Is. : Are you so easily frightened?

ESTHER : Dear little Rosalie. Our only joy, the only sunshine in the house. But for her what should we be now? Mere shadows. You are rich, Solomon, and we live in plenty—may ours be the lot of all the children in Israel! It were a sin to complain. But the house is so gloomy. Mother is forever weeping. You, forever sad. Ah's me, what a life is ours!

SOL. Is. : Haven't you yourself just said truly that on smoke alone one cannot live. Twenty thousand rubles have I added to my fortune in this one season. Do I need the money? Do you need it? Does Rosalie need it? Smoke, smoke, smoke! It's only smoke that blinds the eye and befogs the brain, but never warms the heart. Never. Akh, what's the use? Please, Esther, let me—let me read a little.

ESTHER : Haven't you read enough? Did you ever

hear? Such a plague! Books, books, nothing but books! Ai, Solomon, read a little, eat a little, rest a little! Be a man.

SOL. IS.: (*Smiling*) I study the Holy Books, Esther.

ESTHER: That for your Holy—— (*Slaps her mouth.*) It is only a sin to talk to you. Do you intend to become a Rabbi? I ask you. You won't be a Rabbi, believe me.

SOL. IS.: (*Smiling*) Oh, no, not I. A Rabbi? (*Shakes his head slowly, and laughs softly.*) One must be cock-sure about his Torah and Talmud, to presume to answer all questions. But I am only one of the perplexed. I know only to ask questions. Only to ask them, I fear. (*Starts to walk about the room.*)

ESTHER: (*Looking after him*) So I may go now. Eh, Solomon?

SOL. IS.: Oh, please, Esther. Can't you do me this little favor? I want to read a little, just leave me alone.

(Enter Miriam.)

(*She looks much older, much weaker, and leans on a heavy cane for support.*)

SOL. IS.: (*Tenderly*) Let me help you to the sofa, mother. You will be more comfortable here.

MIRIAM: I am not in your way, son? You are not busy?

ESTHER: He not busy! (*Perceiving his vigorous signing to her.*) I'll tell her all. He has just been sending me away, mother; hasn't read enough in his books, you see.

MIRIAM: This is not right, Solomon. You must give her a little of your time. What joys has she? Without children of her own, and a widow? Come here, Esther. (*Motioning her to sit down near her.*) You must be kind to her, Solomon.

SOL. IS.: Indeed, mother, I mean well by her.

ESTHER: But you always grudge me a little of your time.

MIRIAM: Be just, Esther. Solomon is always kind to you. Only he is impatient at times—just as father used to be, may he rest in peace. Kind, yet impatient. A little more forbearance, my son.

SOL. IS.: You take it too much to heart, mother. Don't let such trifles disturb you. They are not worth it. (*Looking at his watch.*) You haven't had your rest, I see. Esther, we have thoughtlessly disturbed mother.

MIRIAM: Not at all, children. You have not disturbed me.

SOL. IS.: You should now be in your room, resting. The doctor says a little sleep in the afternoon may do you good.

ESTHER: Yes, mother. Come to your room. It's quieter there.

MIRIAM: But I cannot sleep.

SOL. IS.: You excite yourself unnecessarily, I fear. You need quiet.

MIRIAM: (*Sighs*) Blessed are they that are granted what they need most.

SOL. IS.: Hasn't the doctor prescribed for you? Or are his drugs impotent? I'll invite a professor from abroad, then.

MIRIAM: No, Solomon, the doctor is a kind man, and knowing. But the physician's skill is only vanity, without the blessings from on high.

ESTHER: Don't despair, mother. Heaven is merciful. Come to your room, and be rested.

MIRIAM: Sleep is not rest.

SOL. Is.: At least, it is forgetfulness.

MIRIAM: Ah's me, my son. Man's devices are but for the flesh, and my ailment is not of the body. Woe to me. (*Rises to the attitude of prayer.*) Woe to me in my wickedness! Oh, Merciful Father. Have pity upon my unworthy soul, and release a poor, heart-broken mother from the cruel anguish. I am old. I have lived long enough, and have suffered enough. Oh, how I have suffered. Sweet Father in Heaven! Hear thou my prayer and account it not a sin. No, no, no. Away from me, wicked thoughts! Away! I doubt not His justice. Thy Holy Will be done. But if all the suffering Thou hast seen fit to apportion me in thy just wrath, has not been yet measured out to me in full, be it then Thy Holy Will to grant me this one favor. Send me some forgetfulness; let not my sleep be disturbed by those dreams, those frightful dreams. (*Falls into her seat, exhausted, her voice gradually falling to a whisper.*) My poor boy. My poor dear boy. Dovidel, Dovidel, my darling son. Away are you from your mother. Far, far away, in Siberia—among cruel heathens. Tormented, tortured, and in chains. At hard labor, in Siberia, and in chains. My Dovidel, my gentle boy, in chains. He, that would not hurt God's meanest creature, in chains. He, a criminal in chains. He, with his sweet temper, his tender heart, more loving than a mother's—he plagued and tortured at hard labor, in Siberia, in chains. My Dovidel, Dovidel, Dovidel (*in a dying whisper*).

(*Esther breaks out in loud sobs. Miriam, suddenly aroused by Esther's tears, in a loud voice.*) Weep, my daughter, weep. Cry to our Merciful Father in Heaven that he may for your sake, if not for mine, take pity on your

poor mother and send me tears to melt the despair in my heart. Pray, Solomon, my son, pray! (*In a whisper*) My Dovidel, my Dovidel, Dovidel.

Ros. SOL.: (*Behind the stage*) Fie, girls, listening at the door! Fie! And you, too, Masha. Are not you— (*Her voice breaks off suddenly, and then, after a pause*) Ah's me! What do I hear! (*Opens the door hastily and makes straight for Miriam.*) Grandma crying? My dear grandma crying? (*Hastily unbonneting, she throws herself at Miriam's feet, kisses her fingers, talking to her all the while.*) What have they done to my Babusya? Tell me all. I know. I know. They have been thoughtless, careless. (*Pressing her cheek to Miriam's hand; Miriam's lips moving in inaudible whisper.*) Am I not your pet, Babusya, dear? How white your hand, and how delicate! Don't be grieved, Babusya, dear, fondle me, pat me. Thus. Thus. (*Leading Miriam's hand as if teaching her how to pat her.*) Ah is me. I have left my Babusya just for one little hour to visit my poor— (*Here a good plan suggests itself to her. She no longer wavers, but goes straight to the point. Now she exactly knows what to say, and as she proceeds she sees her way more and more clearly.*) Oh, Babusya, what nice little children I have just visited.

MIRIAM: My poor Dovidel . . . Dovidel . . . far . . . far away in Siberia . . . in chains. . . .

Ros. SOL.: (*Throwing off her coat, and then resuming her place at Miriam's feet*) Yes, dearest grandma. Yes. Nice little children, all of them. Boys and girls, so innocent, so pure. And I gave them presents and sweets, and made them so happy!

MIRIAM: Oh, my poor Dovidel.

Ros. SOL.: Yes, Babusya, yes, fondle me, pat me, Babusya. Thus. Thus. And I told them to pray for my uncle David. Don't you like your little Rosalie? I shall cry, Babusya. (*Her voice is choking with tears, but she succeeds in mastering herself.*) Let me kiss your fingers. Fondle me, pat me. Thus. Thus. And the little children did pray. So pure, so gentle, so happy. And God, you know, will hear THEIR prayer. Yes, He will.

MIRIAM: Oh, merciful Father in Heaven. (*Esther sobbing out aloud.*) Hush, Esther, hush.

Ros. SOL.: No, Babusya dear, it's not auntie's fault. Auntie is kind and thoughtful. I know who is to blame. Papa is to blame.

MIRIAM: Hush, my child, hush. (*Patting her now of her own free will, albeit rather listlessly.*)

Ros. SOL.: No, Babusya dear, papa is to blame. He is not a dutiful son.

MIRIAM: Hush, you obstinate child. (*Patting her.*) You must not speak thus of your father.

Ros. SOL.: Now you are angry with me, Babusya. (*Putting her head in Miriam's lap.*) I know you are angry. I have been naughty. Forgive me. Wouldn't you forgive me?

MIRIAM: Yes, my sweet little angel.

Ros. SOL.: (*Kissing Miriam's hand*) Kind grandma. But I have been naughty ever since this morning. And I saw such a dream.

MIRIAM: (*Anxiously*) A dream, child! A dream! My poor Rosochka, my poor, poor baby! Woe's me. Do you also see dreams?

Ros. SOL.: Why, of course, grandma. And such a nice

dream it was. And I wanted to tell you, but forgot. Forgive. I forgot. Such a sweet dream!

MIRIAM: (*With a deep sigh*) A sweet dream, child.

Ros. SOL.: Oh, yes, grandma. (*Rising from the floor and taking Miriam's face between both her hands.*) I only wish it came true. It was like this. Do you want to hear it?

MIRIAM: Yes, dearest.

Ros. SOL.: I was once more a little, little girl; and I had some hard examples to do; but I did not know how. And I thought of uncle David; he would help me; and I looked for him. (*Miriam sighs.*) But he was nowhere. And I was in the street among a big, big crowd of people; all strangers; and all busy and bustling, running hither and thither, and nobody cared for me, and I felt so lonely. Oh, how I longed to see uncle David. Suddenly I saw him, far, far away from me. (*Miriam covers her face and cries softly.*) And he, too, was running, running faster and faster without hardly glancing at me.

MIRIAM: And Dovidel, too, was running? And you did see him in your dream?

Ros. SOL.: As plainly as I see you, Babusya.

MIRIAM: Be you blessed forever, dearest child. Heaven is kind to you. Ah's me! Were such bliss but granted poor me! Be it not accounted me a sin. And whither was he running? Tell me, child. Tell me all.

Ros. SOL.: Towards me, Babusya. And as he passed me he smiled.

MIRIAM: He smiled.

Ros. SOL.: And said: "I must hasten home, little one."

MIRIAM: "Hasten home."

Ros. SOL.: "I know your worries," he said, "but I have

no time to stop on the way. Mother is waiting for me. I must hie me home, home, home."

MIRIAM: "Home, home, home."

Ros. SOL.: Yes, Babusya; I heard it clearly. No mistake about it. Three times he said it.

MIRIAM: Three times?

Ros SOL.: Three times he said it, and then smiled again.

MIRIAM: Three times he said it and smiled again. Oh, Merciful Father in Heaven, praised be thy infinite Wisdom. Oh, God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, turn Thy Holy wrath to blessed mercy and grant that this pure child's dream come true.

ESTHER and SOL. Is.: Amen!

Ros. SOL.: Do you know what, dear grandma? I have a presentiment—in my very heart I feel it—that this dream was sent me as an omen, a good omen.

MIRIAM: (*Embracing Rosalie*) May Heaven heed thy sweet words! May they be uttered in a lucky hour! You have the presentiment? In your heart you feel it? And yours, dearest, dearest Risochnka, is a true heart, and it cannot play you false. Have you heard her, Esther? Have you, Solomon? What do you say, children?

ESTHER: Let us hope for the best. He, whose name I am unworthy to mention, is merciful.

SOL. Is.: It's a pleasant dream, of course. But it is only a dream, mother. I certainly wish it came true.

MIRIAM: Ah, I know you, Solomon. You must needs think your own way. What all the world believes, isn't good enough for you.

Ros. SOL.: Bear up with him, grandma dear. Papa doesn't believe in dreams. Let us rather go to your room.

There I'll tell you all. How uncle looked, and how he was dressed. Yes, Babusya? You'll lie down in your bed, or on the sofa, and I'll tell you all while you are resting.

MIRIAM: Yes, child. And you will open the window, as dear Dovidel used to do. He was always mindful of his old mother, and so kind to me! But, perhaps, you are tired?

Ros. SOL.: I tired?

MIRIAM: Or you must study in your books?

Ros. SOL.: I have done for to-day. Only I'll want some seltzer. Masha! Masha!

MASHA: Yes, ma-am.

Ros. SOL.: Get me some seltzer, and some wine, please. Fetch them to grandma's room. We'll be there. And, here, put away my things. And by the way, do you know, Masha, I owe you a scolding? Well, well, we'll put it off till to-morrow, I guess. But I may forget, you know. So first thing in the morning, kindly remind me to give you the scolding. (*Masha covers her face with her apron, and laughs.*) Indeed, girl, indeed. It was not nice of you to listen at the door. However, the sooner we forget a bad thing the better. Now be off. But don't forget the wine and the seltzer. Come, grandma.

(*Masha gathers up Rosalie's hat and coat and leaves through the door on the right.*)

MIRIAM: Come, child. Take my arm, or I'll rather take yours. For shall not the old lean on younger strengths?

Ros. SOL.: (*Looking over her shoulder, as Miriam takes her arm*) Papa, I was rather disrespectful in what I said. You do not mind, papa?

SOL. Is. : Mind? Why, bless you, child! You are our guardian angel!

MIRIAM: (*To Rosalie*) Don't you mind him, pet. He only tries to spoil you.

Ros. SOL. : Oh, auntie. Masha may bring me some of the white table-wine, and that's so sour. I want something sweet, and (*with a significant look*) strong, you know.

ESTHER: I know, Rosalie, I know. I'll send you the right wine. I'll attend to that myself. And—and—hm—will you not have some fruit besides? Ah, what pears? What grapes! You are fond of grapes, I know. Shall n't I send you some for refreshment?

Ros. SOL. : Provided you have picked them out yourself, auntie dear.

ESTHER: Haven't I? So may I live to see your wedding day with my own eyes, dearest! I have picked them out, every bunch of them, with my own hands. Havne't I, Solomon. Haven't I?

Ros. SOL. : Then I shall certainly have some.

ESTHER: There's a good child. And some pears, eh? Or, do you know what?

Ros. SOL. : I know it'll soon be time for the evening tea, auntie. Besides, papa may want some of your pears, I am sure.

(*Exeunt Miriam and Rosalie.*)

SOL. IS. : (*Calling after Rosalie*) You mischievous elf.

ESTHER: Now you see, Solomon, she'll soothe poor mother now; she'll make her take her dose of the wine and then lull her to rest; as sure as I live. And she did not refuse my grape, either. Don't you spoil my pleasure now. Eh, Solomon?

SOL. Is.: Nor will I. To please you, I shall become simply voracious. (*Begins to eat of the fruit.*)

ESTHER: (*With admiring tenderness*) See, Solomon? Am I not right? Isn't dear Rosalie the sunshine of the house? Before she came in—what?

SOL. Is.: Tears and gloom.

ESTHER: And now, eh? May Heaven, indeed, guard her against all harm!

SOL. Is.: Amen!

ESTHER: Without her, where should we be now?

SOL. Is.: We should be now, as before, standing here like two silly scare-crows, at a loss what to say or do—you crying your heart out and I without enough ready wit even to cry.

ESTHER: And that dream of hers, and presentiment—how handy it all came! And just in time!

SOL. Is.: Handy? Just in time? (*Laughs.*)

ESTHER: How, Solomon? Was it all merely an invention?

SOL. Is.: That's exactly what it was, my kind-hearted Esther. A clever invention, eh? And made to order, and on the spot, at that!

ESTHER: You don't mean it! And she only pouted once or twice. That's how she always manages me, in that childish, capricious way of hers. But she didn't cry; not once. And poor mother had such a fit! Worse than usual. My heart would break, I thought. But the dear child didn't so much as drop a tear.

SOL. Is.: Isn't she always so merry, and joking, and gay? Eh, my good Esther, come now. Don't stare at me so! Confess Rosalie is rather a puzzling tangle. Full of

most unreasonable surprises, eh? Ha-ha-ha! (*Taking her by both hands and speaking seriously.*) My good Esther, don't you think—I have meant to ask you this many a time—doesn't Rosalie look very much like—like her mother?

ESTHER: Like Sarahle? May she rest in peace! Why of course, whom else should she look like? Especially the eyes—just like Sarahle's.

SOL. Is.: Yes, yes, my dear sister. The same big, clear soulful eyes. Oh, how I love to look into them. It's my delight. It reminds me—Is that all the resemblance you have noticed? All? Now that the dear child has bloomed into full womanhood? Eh? Speak the truth, my kind, good Esther. Don't fear. It won't hurt me. It can't hurt me.

ESTHER: Hurt you? Why should it hurt you? It's rather a pleasure, I should say.

SOL. Is.: So it is. So it is.

ESTHER: No one needs be sorry for resembling Sarahle—may she rest in peace! So beautiful, so kind; so quiet, and loving—wouldn't hurt a fly! and pious and god-fearing.

SOL. Is.: Woe's me. How sweet the praise, and how well deserved! You loved her, Esther.

ESTHER: As my own life I loved her—may she rest in peace! But what puts these questions into your mind now, after fifteen years?

SOL. Is.: Oh, nothing in particular; but as she was just telling Masha to fetch the wine, it suddenly struck me—

ESTHER: (*Claps her hands to her sides, in sudden alarm*) Here I am wasting my time with you, and Rosalie waiting for the wine, perhaps.

SOL. Is.: And the grapes.

ESTHER: And mother's medicine.

SOL. Is. : Better leave that to Rosalie.

(*Exit Esther in a hurry.*)

SOL. Is. : (*Sadly*) My only child! My noble girl! Ah's me! What country this! What times! Any father might be proud of such a daughter and be happy, but my heart only aches. The worthier I find you, the more it aches. Sad forebodings have entered it and have crowded all the pride and happiness out of it. (*Sighs. Unlocks a drawer in his desk and takes from it a leather booklet containing two pictures of his deceased wife. Gazes at the pictures; then covers up with his finger the upper part of one of them, then the lower, and again the upper.*) Positively, except the eyes, the similarity is but slight. Yet . . . I can't understand it. The resemblance is at times so awfully suggestive. What may that be? Or is anything the matter with me? (*Gazing at the pictures.*) Or is it the expression of the eyes? This sad and saddening look, so full of alarm and entreaty, at once pitying and appealing? (*Gazing away from the pictures into vacancy, shakes his head slowly.*) Yes, yes. I know that look. Oh, I know it too well. Poor, suffering mother has it. Esther has it, Sarah the maid has it. Every Jewish woman has it. More pronounced or less, what matters it? It's there all the time, among all classes and in all conditions of life. It's our national characteristic, that anxious look of alarm, so full of pity and appeal. All-wise Providence was pleased to stamp it upon the mothers of our race. Two thousand years of persecution have not passed over our heads without leaving a deep sear in the tortured soul. From mother to daughter, for generations and generations, has it been transmitted, this constant fear, this blood-curdling, brain-chilling, petrifying fear of lurking dangers and impending disasters

to beloved ones, to dear ones. Woe's me, woe's me! What else could all this savage persecution leave in the aching Jewish heart if not this intense, longing appeal for mercy, mercy, mercy—which was never, never granted, not even to the innocent babe in its cradle. Christians they call themselves! Oh, Christ in heaven! Does not thy Jewish heart bleed, and ache and burn with indignation at the atrocities of thy followers a thousand times more than the mere flesh wounds of the crucifixion? Or art thou powerless in thy just wrath? But what do I say? Christ indignant! Christ in wrath! Christ and anger! Ha-ha-ha! Only an infidel of a Jew could blaspheme thus. These Christians are so loving and forgiving and, oh, so meek! Aren't they? Ha-ha-ha! "Love thy neighbor as thyself" is too small for them. "If thou art smitten on one cheek, present the other." That's Christian doctrine. And so it is, provided the smitten cheek is a Jewish cheek, and the smiting arm is the arm of the meek, and loving, and forgiving Christian—especially so, when the spiritualizing piety of smiting the cheek is well seconded by a substantial grab at the Jewish pocket. And yet, there are they, of our own race—those cowardly, abortive, creeping worms, that are ready to crawl on all their fours and lick the boots of the Orthodox, Right-Glorious, God-appointed rulers of Holy mother-Russia in a dastardly appeal for mercy. A thousand times readier am I to bare this old aching heart to their utmost hellish tortures than beg mercy of them. A Jew begging of them—of them—of that moujik race of drinking, wife-beating Tartar imps—whom I can buy with a couple of rubles like so many mangy curs that are infuriated by their avidity and silenced with a sop! Oh, no, no! Not I. I am a Jew. I believe in

the Father. An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth—this is His doctrine and He is the Father. He knows better. Strike back, and strike with all your might—this is the law of God and nature—this is the law which you, who rank the Son above the Father, do actually and religiously follow—and follow with a vengeance, all your cheap mouthing about love, and mercy, and forgiveness notwithstanding. Nay, give the devil his due. This pious rant about meekness, etc., etc., is a well paying asset of the business and helps the better to beat one's neighbor. As a befogging advertisement alone it is worth its weight in gold. There is a shrewd game for you shrewdly conducted. Ha-ha-ha! (*With a deep sigh, he returns to the pictures.*) My poor wife; my poor Sarahle! How I did love you! Who could have foreseen that terrible blow! But for our orphaned child, I would have followed you. But I had no right to die. I had to live—for little Rosalie's sake I had to live. And I did live when death was a blessing. In the bloom of your youth, in the freshness and gladness of your young life you were ruthlessly hurled into death. And this a Christian country. Oh, how long, my God, how long! So happy, so young, so full of life and hope! Vigor and health in your every motion, in your every breath! (*Shudders.*) Ah, that horrid scene—the unearthly yells of the infuriated, drunken mob—your mangled body in the street, in the mud, in your own blood. Then, darkness. All was darkness. With the light of your eyes went out the light of my soul. In your grave was buried my heart, my love, my happiness, my sunshine. Hatred alone was left me. It is still here. I feel it here. I know it is here. I know it by the hellish fire that is consuming my soul but cannot consume it. Soul? There is no soul here. There shall be none.

I am not a cowardly cur of a natural-born Russian to rob, and kill, and burn, and sing Jesus, Jesus! I am a Jew. I shall have my revenge. Sunday school teaching for Sunday school babies. I am a man. I'll fight back. I'll fight back. Shylock was a man. He would not swallow those knock-out drops of talk about mercy. That virtuous she-shyster in trousers could not fool him. He knew what he was about. He would have his pound of flesh; next to the heart he would have it. But I shall have the heart, and crush it, crush it, as they have crushed mine. I shall see it quivering in its agony, and feast my eyes on the sight. I, too, can be a Christian, if sufficiently provoked. But I shall not sing, "Jesus, Jesus." Not I. If it's to be hell—then let it be hell unmasked. Only cowards strike from under cover.

(CURTAIN.)

## ACT III.

(*The same room. On a chair, the fur coat and fur cap of Phineas Abraamovich Milman.*)  
*(Herzfarb and Milman.)*

PHIN. AB. : Well, well. You are right, of course, but—

SOL. IS. : So there is a *but* after all. And what may that be, pray?

PHIN. AB. : It's a pity, Solomon. It is a pity.

SOL. IS. : (*Shrugs his shoulders*) You are a free man. Do as you please.

PHIN. AB. : But I cannot do as I please.

SOL. IS. : Then do as I tell you.

(*Phineas rises. Takes up his coat, pauses, and looks back at Solomon Isaacovich.*)

PHIN. AB. : So it is of no use?

SOL. IS. : Now, look here, Phineas. You have been talking pity to me until I am tired of it. Why not be a man and face the music? Have you been robbed? Yes. You have been robbed. Will your bills come up for payment? Yes, so they will. Can you meet them all? No, you cannot. Now, what is this young scalawag to you or to me? He has robbed you. Thanks to him, your good standing with your creditors is endangered. I offer to come to your rescue—

PHIN. AB. : But on what terms!

SOL. IS. : That's it. On the condition that you at once proceed against the fellow to the fullest extent of the law.

PHIN. AB. : Ah, but you should have seen the Major,

Solomon. Poor old man. It was a terrible blow to him, as you can well imagine. His son an embezzler! Impossible! Incredible! Ah, how he stormed, at first. An incensed monarch, every inch of him! All his family pride spoke up against it. His son a thief! *His* son! Impossible! It was but malicious slander to hurt his good name, a contemptible fabrication or, at the very best, some unfortunate mistake. "My dear sir," says he to me, "get your bookkeepers to set your books right." But when the truth did, at last, find its way into his dull head—the young scamp, it seems, has confessed—oh, how he begged and begged, not a shadow of his former pride remaining for a remembrance. The disgrace of it! The scandal would kill him! And he begged for time, only for a little time. "I'll pay you back every ruble," says he, "but I haven't the ready cash. Give me the time to raise it in." It was a pity to hear him. I tell you; enough to melt a stone. Oh, if I could but pay my bills! It's for his sake that I speak to you; for the poor father's sake.

SOL. Is.: Why not for the son's?

PHIN. AB.: That scamp!

SOL. Is.: Why not? He is so young. The scandal may prove the ruin of him. Have pity!

PHIN. AB.: On him? On that scamp, the cause of it all? Not I. He certainly deserves all he may get. The embezzler, the gambler, the fast liver. He has enjoyed himself at my expense long enough. Now let him pay for it. Oh, no. I would show him no mercy. Not him.

SOL. Is.: Because he has wronged you? Eh, Phineas?

PHIN. AB.: Hasn't he?

SOL. Is. : I see. Your pocket has suffered, and you are quick enough to resent that.

PHIN. AB. : My pocket? You speak of the money only. Has he wronged me in this alone? Wasn't I even as a father to him? Did I ever spare myself if only I could be of use to him? He came to me a green lad, unable to tell a sable from a sheep-skin. And now he understands the business thoroughly. Who taught him? I did. I.

SOL. IS. : I see.

PHIN. AB. : Or was I ever slow to promote him? No sooner was he proficient in one thing than I showed him the next. Myself have led him on and on, step by step, until he understands the business now as well as myself.

SOL. IS. : And you took all these pains with him because he is of noble birth, a member of the landed nobility?

PHIN. AB. : Of course. I could not be expected to do all this for the first passer-by.

SOL. IS. : And, if you please, how did this young blue-blood repay you? He wasn't over-grateful, was he?

PHIN. AB. : The worthless scamp. The meanest dog would have felt more gratitude.

SOL. IS. : Now, then, talk pity a little more, please. It is so instructive to hear you.

PHIN. AB. : But I speak of his parents, his poor aged parents.

SOL. IS. : Of the gentlefolks themselves. I see. Why not turn Christian altogether, Phineas, and be so meek, so kind, so forgiving?

PHIN. AB. : Can you feel no pity, Solomon.

SOL. IS. : (*Shrugging his shoulders*) I? I am only a Jew.

PHIN. AB. : Only a Jew? What *do* you mean?

SOL. IS. : Just what I say; neither more, nor less.

PHIN. AB. : What has become of you? You are simply not yourself. You have become of late a—a—the evil one alone knows what. Have you really turned demon, or you only pretend you have?

SOL. IS. : Neither. I only try to learn to become one. Don't fear. I'll learn the trick quickly enough.

PHIN. AB. : But why, man? Why? I have known you to be at times—hm—hm—rather strange, but—hm—hm—never cruel, never heartless.

SOL. IS. : Heartless? Cruel? Ah's me, my good Phineas. You are a Jew, and Jews are reputed to be the Sons Merciful; why, then, as I have already suggested, not have pity on that general manager of yours?

PHIN. AB. : Pity on him? On that worthless scamp; that venomous snake! Upon my own bosom have I warmed him—

SOL. IS. : Precisely, Phineas, precisely. That scamp and snake, and so on, and so forth, has hurt you—understand—you, one Phineas Abraamovich Milman, only one Jew, only one. Man, man, open your eyes, time to cease being creeping worms; high time to become men. Pity? Mercy? There are they, thousands upon thousands of our people, of our own blood, Jews as good as ourselves, robbed daily, hourly, of the fruits of their endless toil; robbed systematically, persistently, relentlessly; robbed of their honor, their dignity, their human rights, their good name; slandered and then despised, despised and slandered, again and again; the bleeding wounds from the infuriated knout of the law peppered with hatred and contempt; insult heaped upon

injury mountains high—so that our very hearts are being crushed—and you speak of pity, mercy. . . . You? To me? Eh, Phineas, would to Heaven that all the combined misery of our hapless, persecuted race, were felt by you as keenly, at least, as this one little hurt to one Phineas Abraamovich Milman! But you are so stock-full of pity! You have enough of it to spare even for the savage persecutors of our race! I plead guilty. Heaven has not blessed me with so big a heart. My own little stock of pity is drained to the last drop of it within the Jewish pale.

PHIN. AB.: I am as good a Jew as yourself.

SOL. IS.: But? Now it's my turn to interpose a *but*.

PHIN. AB.: What can we do, Solomon? The Jew is in captivity.

SOL. IS.: (*Savagely*) A—a—ah—you! (*Restrains himself. Then, after a pause*) Then go to the synagogue and bewail the destruction of the temple. We have nothing in common, sir. No, nothing! The captivity! Oh, the silly, hypocritical, weak-kneed, lying attempt to justify our national cowardice. I hate it. Oh, how I hate it. . . . Enough talk. Enough. Either you put that honorable blue-blood in jail, and I make good every ruble he has stolen from you, or forget we ever were friends.

PHIN. AB.: (*After a pause*) Is that final?

SOL. IS.: Final.

(*Another pause.*)

PHIN. AB.: After all, what's the Major to me that I should be any more solicitous of his good name than is his own son? They will say that for the sake of his money, a Jew ruined an honorable family—well, let them.

SOL. IS.: That's right, Phineas. Let them.

PHIN. AB.: You see, the poor Major asked only for time. He is good enough for the amount.

SOL. IS.: I know he is.

PHIN. AB.: All he needs is the time to raise it in. He feels the blow so keenly, poor man.

SOL. IS.: Then give him time.

PHIN. AB.: But I cannot, I must pay my bills.

SOL. IS.: And here we are, just where we started. The whole thing over again. Please, Phineas, make an end of it.

PHIN. AB.: Well, I am sorry.

SOL. IS.: Then, nurse your sorrow.

PHIN. AB.: Good day.

SOL. IS.: Good day.

PHIN. AB.: (*In the doorway*) Won't you reconsider? eh, Solomon?

SOL. IS.: No.

PHIN. AB.: It's a pity. (*Leaves the room; shuts the door; then opens it and puts his head in.*) Is it really final?

SOL. IS.: It is.

PHIN. AB.: Well, I am sorry. Good day. (*Closes the door.*)

SOL. IS.: Good day. Yes, my poor Phineas, I understand you. It is so hard to strike back. It is not always cowardice. (*Sighs.*) Oh, what a miserable lot is ours. Be either a ferocious beast or a contemptible slave in captivity. Choose whichever is to your taste. Happy he that can choose. He is, at least, a whole man; knows his mind. No vacillation, no wasteful tossing about, no doubts. Jog along, and call it life.

PHIN. AB.: (*Re-enters, with fur coat and fur cap on*)

Look here, Solomon. What ever has got possession of you—

SOL. IS.: (*Impatiently*) Oh, well, well, well. How tiresome you are!

PHIN. AB.: If you are bent on—er—er—cranky pranks must I dismiss all common sense?

SOL. IS.: Of course not. But if you mean to bandy witticisms with me, you have ill chosen your time.

PHIN. AB.: I can see that. I am not blind, thank Heaven. Nor am I a match for you, if that's what you mean.

SOL. IS.: Very well, then.

PHIN. AB.: I want to ask of you this one favor.

SOL. IS.: Again?

PHIN. AB.: Hear me out first. It is not that. Can't you have patience just for one minute?

SOL. IS.: Speak.

PHIN. AB.: I can't let the poor Major think that I am so cruel.

SOL. IS.: Then don't.

PHIN. AB.: I can't have him think that I refuse out of sheer spite.

SOL. IS.: Tell him you do it out of love for him.

PHIN. AB.: May I tell him of this my visit?

SOL. IS.: Tell him anything you please.

PHIN. AB.: And that I failed so miserably?

SOL. IS.: Yes, yes. Anything.

PHIN. AB.: And that all depends now on you?

SOL. IS.: (*Hurt to the quick*) Oh, I see. My dear Phineas Abraamovich, permit me to inform you, sir, that I

am no coward. For whatever I do, sir, my shoulders are broad enough to bear the responsibility. Are you satisfied?

PHIN. AB.: I am. Good day.

SOL. IS.: Good day.

PHIN. AB.: (*On his way to the door. Aside*) Noo che-lovetchina! (There is a man for you!) By God, it takes a clever man to make a big crank. Upon my honor it does.

(*Enters Rosalie.*)

(*She wears a fur coat and fur cap; in one hand she has her fur muff; a bound volume and a student's notebook in the other.*)

Ros. SOL.: (*In the doorway*) Ah, Phineas Abraamovich. (*Freeing one hand.*) Shake hands.

PHIN. AB.: Good day, Rosalie. I must be going.

Ros. SOL.: No, sir. This you must not. I come to tell papa (*courtesying in the direction of Solomon Isaacovich*) of my great achievements, and you must stay and admire my utter lack of self-praise.

PHIN. AB.: I really cannot, Rosalie.

Ros. SOL.: Cannot admire me! Oh, horror! Say that again, sir; say that again. Why, look at that frown, that angry glance, that sour smile. . . . You don't intend to eat me up alive—burrr! (*Shudders.*) You must have had quite a tussle here, I see. Oh, come, Phineas Abraamovich, be seated, and tell me all about it. Please. Was it the synagogue choir, the poesy of rituals, the morals of religion, the fatherhood of Christianity, or—wait a second—was it politics? Oh, I know, I know. Why, of course, that's it. Now I have it. The Cuban rebellion. Serves you right, sir. I am pro-Cuban.

PHIN. AB.: And I am pro going home, you chatter-box.

(*Smiles good-naturedly and takes her hand to shake it good-by.*)

Ros. SOL.: That's better. A sour smile neither suits me, nor warms me. It's like a poor sable, Phineas Abraamovich. (*Laughs.*) Like a poor sable. *Au revoir.*

(*Exit Phineas Abraamovich.*)

Ros. SOL.: (*Calling after him*) My regards to all, all, all. Do you hear? Good day. (*Shuts the door, then courtesying ceremoniously to Sol. Is.*) I have the honor, sir, and the pleasure, to report . . . progress. Most excellent progress, sir.

SOL. IS.: (*Smiling*) Yes, child?

Ros. SOL.: (*Pouting*) Ah, sir; what unfeeling frigidity, this? I expected to overwhelm you, sir; thought you would, at least, at the very least, go into ecstasies of joy over my great news, and you freeze me with a monosyllable "yes" of doubting interrogation! I am disappointed, sir; greatly disappointed in you. Oh, dear, dear! How ungrateful papas are. Here I am, plunging into the very depths of English classics, going through all sorts of indescribable tortures by way of making my preliminary acquaintance with that most barbaric tongue, committing crimes against its grammar, suffering from poor spelling, false syntax, and what not; and all that to please you, sir; you, alone, sir; and what my reward! Ah's me! The worry, and anxiety, and cares fathers will cause their children—who can describe or recount? Who?

SOL. IS.: You are in good humor, child.

Ros. SOL.: So I am. Why shouldn't I be?

SOL. IS.: Certainly; the weather is fine; the frost, crisp and invigorating; the walk has done you good.

Ros. SOL.: Fie, sir. The coarse reasoning of the materialist hardly becomes you, the Talmudist, and only rasps painfully against my present most poetical mood. Oh, papa dear. Just think of it! I have written a composition on the Merchant of Venice, written it in English, papa, in English—and what does my most conscientious wooden automaton of an instructor say of it? Here, sir (*pointing to a page in the notebook*), is the impress of his pedagogical judgment crying out from his inmost Britannic soul “Excellent!” Do you see: “Excellent!” written out in big letters, with no hesitating hand.

SOL. Is.: (*Tenderly*) But whence these blue pencil marks? Here, and here, and here—the page looks blue. This seems to tell quite a different tale.

Ros. SOL.: That's nothing. I don't claim perfection. Besides, the composition is but a minor item in my great achievements. My recitation leaves it out of sight! Oh, how I recited! Herein my instructor proved himself worthy of his pupil. We basked in each other's glory. He admired in me his unparalleled success; I in him, his appreciation thereof. Grand total, an overwhelming shower of the most unstinted praise for the purity of my English pronunciation, which was duly accredited as almost faultless. Why, sir, I actually succeeded in delivering some of the *th*'s, as if I had a hot cutlet in my mouth to help me. Thus, I have attained the unattainable. Do you doubt me, sir? Here, I know this by heart. (*Opening the printed volume and pointing out a passage in it.*) Says Shylock to Antonio:—“*What should I say to you? Should I not say, Haf a dawg monyee? Eez eet paressible a cur ken lend free fousand ducats?*” Or this, papa: “*Fair sir, you spet awn me awn O-enzday last—you*

*spurned me such a day; another time you called me dog."* But I forget: English isn't Hebrew; it's quite foreign to your Talmudic Excellency.

SOL. Is. : Can you not be a little more earnest, Rosalie? More serious?

Ros. SOL. : (*Pouting*) I? What for, papa? Aren't you earnest enough and thoughtful enough for both of us?

SOL. Is. : I have business cares, child.

Ros. SOL. : And I don't care for business. Hence, to paraphrase the poet, I am glad because thou art sad.

SOL. Is. : And thoughtless, because I am thoughtful?

Ros. SOL. : Yes, sir; so as to keep up the equilibrium lest the firm totter.

SOL. Is. : A division of labor, child, that is not much to my taste.

Ros. SOL. : No wonder it isn't. Being top-heavy you are in the greater danger of toppling over.

SOL. Is. : (*Laughing uneasily*) A cheering outlook, indeed.

Ros. SOL. : Then, why not readjust matters? Take you, papachka, some of my cheerfulness and thoughtlessness, and give me in return some of your sadness and earnestness. Yes, papachka? Yes?

SOL. Is. : (*Patting her*) My dear child.

Ros. SOL. : Why not, papa? You can teach me, I can learn. (*Sol. Is. shakes his head in the negative.*) Be not obstinate, papa. You have taught me to be helpful to others —or life is but a barren desert. Did I ever forget your teaching? Why not let me be helpful to you, if I can?

SOL. Is. : (*Ill at ease*) My little one is more earnest now

than I have bargained for. Your moods are so changeable, child.

Ros. SOL.: You have troubles, papa? Why not share them with me?

SOL. Is.: For the simple reason that I have none. Go, now, to your room. Take a good rest; or, better still, go to grandma; she needs you more than I.

Ros. SOL.: So? I am abruptly dismissed.

SOL. Is.: Go, child. Go.

Ros. SOL.: Is business so pressing, you can't give me a half hour of your time?

SOL. Is.: Well, yes. It is. The new sheds will be ready by next Monday, and we must begin carting. Now is the time. The roads are hard frozen; the moujiks are idle any way. I can get carts and men very cheap. Besides, I must have all the lumber in before it begins to thaw. With bad roads, my hands will be tied. But this does not interest you, I see.

Ros. SOL.: Yes, it does. If you can't admire my achievements, I can admire yours. So, now we can get carts and men cheap. Ingenious generalship worthy of an able "captain of industry." It is quite refreshing.

SOL. Is.: (*Scrutinizing her; then kindly and soothingly*) Is my little girl in the fighting mood now?

Ros. SOL.: I am. I have offered peace. You prefer war. I must now follow suit.

SOL. Is.: Does it suit you to follow?

Ros. SOL.: Shall not the daughter obey her father?

SOL. Is.: Therefore, we are rebelliously obedient? (*Pats her gently on the head.*)

Ros. SOL.: I have a right to be. If you choose to play

at hide-and-seek with me, I may manoeuvre for position. You hide behind business; therefore will I scrutinize that very same business the more closely in order to find you there.

SOL. Is. : But I do not hide, Rosalie.

Ros. SOL. : The less reason then to thwart my curiosity. Besides, I *am* interested in business.

SOL. Is. : (*Growing uneasy*) Business is not charity, child.

Ros. SOL. : I do not know about that; as, for instance, is it a paying business you have now undertaken? Now, seriously, is it?

SOL. Is. : (*Trying to conceal his uneasiness*) Tut-tut-tut, little one. Is the junior member of Herzfarb and Co. really interested in the doings of the firm?

Ros. SOL. : I am. Now answer my question.

SOL. Is. : Do you really wish to know?

Ros. SOL. : I do, papa.

SOL. Is. : Well, well, to tell the honest truth, I am bound to lose by this move. But I haven't been idle. The loss will be reduced to its possible minimum.

Ros. SOL. : And what will you gain by it?

SOL. Is. : Gain? Nothing.

Ros. SOL. : A loss without a gain, papa? How can that be? I know you better.

SOL. Is. : Thanks for the compliment (*Taking her by the ear as if to pull it for her.*) But I have heard it said, that a certain hot-headed, mischievous little fault-finder did not like over much the generalship of a certain captain of industry. Now, Rosalie, like a brave little girl, confess yourself beaten on all points.

Ros. Sol.: Alas, sir! Have we come to that that the senior member and general manager of the firm accepts the compliment intended for my father? As junior partner, sir, I cannot permit the firm to receive goods assigned to another.

Sol. Is.: (*Delighted*) Well said, little one; well said. (*Rubs his hands with satisfaction.*) Then, may I beg, dear madam, to be informed whom I have the honor to address?

Ros. Sol.: That's it, papa. Let us clearly understand each other. Speak to me as the man, whom I honor, as my father, my teacher, but not as the business man. If you lose money intentionally, of your own free choice, I have no doubt but your motives are honorable, your intentions good.

Sol. Is.: Tut-tut-tut, my dear child, whence this vehemence? What ails my little one?

Ros. Sol.: Nothing; unless, indeed, it's a pain from your pain, a reflection of your ailment. Oh, speak, papa, speak.

Sol. Is.: (*Rises, takes a turn in the room*) If I have suffered, I have not complained. I have kept it all to myself. Above all, I have kept it from you, my child. Why cast a shadow over your happiness?

Ros. Sol.: Ah, my good kind-hearted father: "When they shear the sheep, the lambs tremble." Or are we too Jewish to remember Yiddish? too select to learn from the common people?

Sol. Is.: (*Touched; pats her on the head once, twice; takes her head between both his hands, and turns up her face the better to see in her eyes; then lovingly*) So we are Jewish, after all! Brought up in Russia—so runs your argument, doesn't it—nursed on the noblest Russian sentiment, fed on the best Russian thought, reared on Russian science,

Russian literature, Russian art—is there still beating here a Jewish heart, a warm little Jewish heart—

Ros. Sol.: Oh, yes, papa; yes!

SOL. Is.: —full of hot, pure, red blood—

Ros. Sol.: Yes, papa; yes!

SOL. Is.: —pulsating in unison with the lofty ideals of our nation, with its noblest aspirations? Pained with the woes of our long-suffering people and rejoicing in their joys?

Ros. Sol.: Yes, papa; yes. For, am I not the daughter of my father?

SOL. Is.: The bone of my bone, the flesh of my flesh, the blood of my blood.

Ros. Sol.: And the thought of your thought, the heart of your heart, and the soul of your soul.

SOL. Is.: My dearest child! (*Kisses her, suppressing a sob; then, thoughtfully*) Yet, your claim is you are a Russian.

Ros. Sol.: A Jewish Russian, papa.

SOL. Is.: And I a Russian Jew. Woe's me. Herein is all the difference.

Ros. Sol.: Oh, papa! papa! why should mere words—

SOL. Is.: But words have meaning. (*Shakes his head slowly*.) They have a meaning.

Ros. Sol.: Then, share your sorrows with me. Open up your heart to me.

SOL. Is.: What for, child? What good will it do you?

Ros. Sol.: Me? Am I alone to be considered? (*Suddenly changing her tone*.) Sir, dare you tell me you hold my father in so little esteem as to deem him unworthy of my consideration? (*Threatening with her finger*.) Be-

ware, sir, lest his daughter resent the slight. (*Proudly*) The eagle screaming, sir, the eaglets raise their heads.

SOL. Is.: (*Smiling sadly*) Can my eaglet fly?

Ros. SOL.: Dare you doubt it? (*As if reciting a lesson*) Fair sir, on Wednesday last you called me dreamer; mischievous elf you termed me such a day, another time you called me hot-headed fault-finder. Now what should I say to you? Shall I not say: "Has a—

SOL. Is.: (*Affected, murmurs*) Child! Child!

Ros. SOL.: —a dreamer no wings? Is it possible (*Sol. Is. approaches her with outstretched arms*) an elf can fear the solitude or shun the dark or a hot-headed fault-finder shrink from plunging headlong into an unequal combat? Then, sir, fly you ever so high, I follow you. Descend you into the very abyss, I follow you.

SOL. Is.: Child, speak. What language this? What mocking words these?

Ros. SOL.: Mocking? Oh, papa, am I not a Jewess?

SOL. Is.: (*Retreating a step; then, savagely*) Was not Shylock a Jew?

Ros. SOL.: (*Vehemently*) Oh, no, no, no, papa; no! he was no more a Jew than his daughter Jessica was a Jewess.

SOL. Is.: Shylock—not—a Jew, and Shakespeare a genius?

Ros. SOL.: What of it? Wasn't (*after thinking a moment*)—Well, Dante—wasn't he a genius? But you don't go to his *Divine Comedia* for your geography, do you? You don't look for his *Inferno* on the map, do you? Nor should you look for a Shylock among the Jews. You can't find him there. Shylock a Jew! Indeed. As well might

some unkempt gaping yokel put up the claim that he has sounded the depth of the eternal wanderer and measured it. To be sure, he could wonder at the strange, road-dusty garment; he could notice the angry frown planted on the lofty brow by the attacks of the hungry pack of ignorance and wickedness, or fanaticism; he could even notice his staff and the gold on it; and describe it, as Shakespeare did in the inimitable splendor of his poetry.—But to see deeper, to penetrate through the outer weather-beaten shell into the heart, the soul, the mind of the world's great wanderer and greater sufferer—ha—ha—ha—ha! As well might foggy London strain to give birth to sunny Venice or the puny Avon pit itself against the mighty Volga.

SOL. Is.: My dear-est, dea-rest child!

Ros. SOL.: Do I understand you right, papa? Do I keep in touch with you? Have I put my finger on the inflamed wound and caused you burning pain? (*Embracing him.*) Oh, my dear suffering papa'chka, share with me your sorrow. Hide it not from me, or my happiness will run away from me to search for yours.

(*Enters Esther.*)

ESTHER: What do I see? That's it; that's the way she manages us all. Loo kout, Solomon. Don't let her have her way. What's up, dear? Oh, I know your game. Don't you, Solomon, give in. She spends enough on her charities as it is. (*To Rosalie*) Or is it something extra?

Ros. SOL.: It is, dear Auntie, I am indeed sorry that you try to spoil my game.

ESTHER: Why, why, child. That's altogether different. Can't you help her out, somehow? Eh, Solomon?

Ros. SOL.: That he can, but he won't.

ESTHER: He won't, eh? And you so clever. (*Confidentially*) He wants you to coax him some more. That's what he wants. Time enough you knew that. At him, once more. (*Aside*) I like to see her that way myself.

Ros. SOL.: I did my very best, Auntie dear.

ESTHER: Still, he refuses? Surely, Solomon, it cannot be that the child is imposed upon.

SOL. Is.: (*Patting Ros.*) Oh, no; it's no imposition.

ESTHER: And the case is a deserving one?

Ros. SOL.: And urgent, Auntie. Oh, very urgent and deserving; isn't it, papa?

ESTHER: And he still refuses?

Ros. SOL.: Oh, he is so cruel.

ESTHER: Sh—sh, child.

Ros. SOL.: Why be so unkind to me, papa'chka dear? Am I papa's own girl no longer? Be a good papa. I want a good, kind papa (*clinging to him*). Besides, papas must be obedient. Mustn't they, auntie?

SOL. Is.: Enough, child; enough. You only unnerves me.

Ros. SOL.: (*Vehemently*) But why, papa, why?

ESTHER: (*Puzzled; looks now at one, now at the other; throws herself into a chair demonstratively and resolutely*) Then tell me about this case, and be assured you won't have to plead with *me* half as much. Did you ever hear? "Unnerves me!" Fiddlesticks! Come, dear, tell me your story.

Ros. SOL.: You tell it, papa.

SOL. Is.: I?

Ros. SOL.: Yes, auntie; yes. Make him tell it to you. He knows all about it. In fact, he can tell it better than I.

SOL. Is.: Oh, Rosalie, spare me that.

Ros. SOL. : Shall I tell it, then?

SOL. IS. : Do you know it?

Ros. SOL. : I do. Shall I tell it?

SOL. IS. : As you please.

Ros. SOL. : Be it so. (*Collecting her thoughts*) You see, auntie, it is about—a—about a poor wanderer.

ESTHER : A Jew?

Ros. SOL. : Oh, yes; a Jew—a wandering Jew.

ESTHER : Married? A large family?

Ros. SOL. : A very large family.

ESTHER : In distress?

Ros. SOL. : Oh, in great distress, auntie dear.

ESTHER : Of course, a large family and in great distress; for, how else should it be? Misfortune never comes alone. "Destitution, whither turnest thou thy steps? To the destitute," as the saying is. The usual case.

Ros. SOL. : Not so, auntie; not so! Time was when the poor wanderer knew better days, had his own home and lands, and worked and prayed, and God prospered him, and he earned his bread honestly and was contented and lived happily among his neighbors.

SOL. IS. : And then it came to pass that his neighbors, witnessing his prosperity, became envious and started to pick quarrels with him.

Ros. SOL. : (*Facing her father*) Exactly. But it also came to pass that his children grew fat and began to kick.

SOL. IS. : This is true, too—unfortunately.

ESTHER : Then, he has himself to blame, child.

Ros. SOL. : Blame, auntie? Blame? Oh, this is the porcupine back we turn on the unfortunate to shield our own convenience and even our purse. For, as it has been wisely

said: "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone."

ESTHER: (*Piously*) True, child; true. Blessed be He whose name I am unworthy to mention. I am only a simple Jewess, but you are learned in our Holy Scripture—

SOL. IS.: (*Smiling*) Ah, my simple-heated Esther.

ESTHER: (*With suspicious uneasiness, to Rosalie*) Is it not so written?

Ros. SOL.: It is, auntie, dear.

SOL. IS.: To be sure, it is so written, black on white, and no mistake about it. But the stones are flying thick and fast about the head of the poor wanderer, for all that! Ha-ha-ha!

ESTHER: (*Reproachfully*) Nothing to laugh at, I should think. So the poor man quarreled with his neighbors.

Ros. SOL.: Yes; quarreled and made peace with them and then quarreled again. In a word, he behaved quite correctly. Then his troubles began. The family, while growing larger, became poorer and weaker. Strangers took away their home from them. Still all was not lost. The unfortunate family have a great legacy.

ESTHER: Yes? It's really interesting. Is the legacy worth much?

Ros. SOL.: (*Looking furtively at her father*) Well, well. That depends . . .

SOL. IS.: Why do you hesitate? The question is quite relevant (*to Esther in explanation of the big word*)—I mean, it is to the point—and deserves a plain, straightforward answer. Or is my little eaglet already arrested in its flight and can rise no higher?

Ros. SOL.: That's for me, auntie. Papa is in good

humor, and he enjoys teasing me a bit. As to this legacy it is worth much, very much; for the family anyway. For them it is indeed priceless.

ESTHER: I understand that, for of what use could it be to others?

SOL. Is.: Ha-ha-ha! Therein is the joke. You are no expert in business, my good Esther. Men are tricky. Better hear the story out to the end.

Ros. SOL.: At first but few people outside the family knew of the legacy.

SOL. Is.: Not so, Rosalie. The fact is, it was known far and wide. It was never kept a secret. Only those fool outsiders were at first too ignorant and too stupid to appreciate its value.

Ros. SOL.: But, finally, they did appreciate it. And what do you think, auntie, did they do?

ESTHER: What?

Ros. SOL.: They simply copied the will—

SOL. Is.: Quite right, my child.

Ros. SOL.: —and then altered it a bit here and there.

SOL. Is.: True, child; true.

ESTHER: They did!

Ros. SOL.: —and then they set up the claim that their altered copy was the only true one.

ESTHER: Did you ever hear the like of it?

Ros. SOL.: And the better to lend countenance to their claim, they declared the poor family impostors, swindlers, thieves, robbers, and being the stronger, they kicked them, and beat them, chasing them from one end of the world to the other, beating and kicking them all the while, until the

poor, hapless wanderers are now mere shadows of their former selves, miserable wrecks, pitiable to behold.

SOL. Is.: True, my dear child; true.

Ros. Sol.: So much so, in fact, that this everlasting kicking has finally left the poor wandering Jew without a vestige of his former manhood, made him a mere rag for any cowardly beast to wipe his feet on.

SOL. Is.: Not so, Rosalie, not so. The wandering Jew is numerous and there are all sorts of him. The creeping, burrowing worm and the soaring eagle—has not the Creator made them both? And there are they, I tell you, that value honor, pride, their national pride, their manhood, as life itself.

Ros. Sol.: I know that. But——

SOL. Is.: But?

Ros. Sol.: [(*Aside*) Oh, if I but could talk to him without arousing his suspicion.] Oh, please, papa dear.

SOL. Is.: Speak, girl, speak!

Ros. Sol.: What for?

SOL. Is.: How “what for”? Haven’t you just been demanding your share? Or is my little one, after all, afraid the load may prove too much for her?

Ros. Sol.: (*After some hesitation*) Well, suppose I am afraid. Am I not a Jewess? Fear is our national trait.

SOL. Is.: Ah, that!

(*Pause. Sol. Is. shakes his head slowly, then lets it fall on his chest; his fingers twitch nervously, he is lost in thought. Rosalie watches him closely, in anxious suspense, and hardly listens to Esther.*)

ESTHER: (*Reproachfully, with suppressed vehemence*) Ai-ai-ai, Rosalie. You should have held your tongue. You

think I haven't guessed your meaning? A Jew is not a heathen, not a drunkard to look for brawls and fights. You have only hurt him, your own father. Oh-oh-oh! How thoughtless children are! (*Sighs.*) And a bitten tongue smarts the more because it is its own kin that bit it.

SOL. Is.: By heaven, child, this is not true. If the Jew fails of bodily courage—the spirit cannot always command the flesh, nor can one tell by the prison cell whom it holds—the Jew still has that higher courage, the courage of his convictions; has always had it, and many were they that ascended the pyre for the sake of God; yet not a quivering muscle did the glaring flames disclose on their inspired countenance. Father Abraham knew how to lead his son Isaac unto the altar; and neither faltered, neither shrank, and—upon my word—neither was a Christian.

Ros. SOL.: (*Managing to speak with indifference*) Exceptions do not invalidate the rule.

SOL. Is.: Ex-cep-tions? Exceptions, do you say? Here: Esther, my good sister, would you embrace Christianity?

ESTHER: (*Perplexed by the bookish phrase*) Eh, Solomon?

SOL. Is.: I mean, would you turn Christian?

ESTHER: (*Claps her hands and holds them up in horror*) Whatever bad dreams I dreamt last night, and the night before, and the whole livelong year—may they all befall the heads of my enemies. Did you ever hear! What lunacy to enter a sound mind! Bethink you, brother. Woe's me! What is the matter with you?

SOL. Is.: But suppose they offered you thousands upon thousands of rubles.

ESTHER: (*Impatiently*) Ai, Solomon, with your leave, what foolishness this!

SOL. IS.: Offered you sacks of gold, and—

ESTHER: A snap for their gold. Go to. These are not fitting words to speak to a daughter of a Jew.

SOL. IS.: Or, suppose they would threaten you with Siberia.

ESTHER: I spit upon their Siberia. Nor will I listen to you. Not a word more! Did you ever hear the like of it? Did you ever hear?

SOL. IS.: Thank you, my good sister. (*Smiling, to Rosalie*) She, too, is an exception, isn't she? And so am I an exception. And so are you—you, who would readily kiss the cross to humor a bed-ridden Christian among your poor, but would never wear it for your own aggrandizement. Eh, we are a stiff-necked tribe, girl. Therein is our national pride. We have never lacked the courage to live up to our principles, or to die for them when necessary. Fortitude in adversity—that's Judaism. Persecution may annoy us, but we defy the torturer to do his worse. "Sufferance is the badge of our tribe?" True. Undeniably true. But how great, how lofty, how immense the mission that so trying and purifying a badge should be deemed its worthy emblem? Circumcision is but a ritual. But what its solemn meaning? In thy own blood, with thy own hands, shalt thou tear from thee together with thy own flesh all that's base and mean, and low in thee, the better to free the spirit in its eternal yearning for the higher, the purer—aye, for the highest, the purest, the loftiest that is in Heaven. And ever and anon was the martyred Jew the savior of Society. And a martyred Jew it was that gave birth to Christianity, that gath-

ered the pagan hordes into the fold of the one God, the only true God, the God of the patriarchs, of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob. Of our tribe he was. The prophets and the teachers—they came from among us. Oh, the Jew has a mission among the nations. That's why we are scattered all over the world. That the yeast should work the better, it must be well diffused. We have taught peoples God; have given them religion, morals, the future life. We have given them Jesus. Oh, we are indeed the chosen people. For—what does Judaism teach? To redeem man God orders his favorite Abraham to offer up his son Isaac in expiatory sacrifice. For the sins of all the Almighty chooses to pay in the blood of his dearest. But is the sacrifice inadequate? inefficient? Is a still greater sacrifice needed? And in his Infinite Love he sacrifices his own son to save mankind. That's Jewish tradition, an essentially Jewish inspiration. That's the way the Jew thinks and feels. Aye—and if a still greater sacrifice is needed—not merely a favorite, not only God's son—but His own chosen people in its entirety is given the badge of sufferance, that it may be worthy of its mission to redeem mankind. To wear the cross that man be saved—this is our mission. To be a Christian one must, like Christ, first be a Jew. And if they, those Christians, those followers of Him, whom they don't follow, have in return for Christ given us a Shylock, and envy has turned their gratitude to venom; if we are being beaten, kicked, robbed, insulted, slandered, trodden under foot, and hunted like beasts, then—then—I—I—No, it is not that, child. It is not that. What did I want to say? Oh, yes. That's it. I believe in progress. I believe in man. The time is coming when brains will prevail, not brute force; when enlightened justice will rule,

not the fist. Then, child, then, and not before, will the world for the first time know Christ, and disavow Judas. Then will the Martyr whisper in the Christian heart, not the traitor. Then will the Jew have fulfilled his mission; then will there be no need of his badge; then will be the end of his suffering, the end of the Captivity.

ESTHER: Amen! Sweet Father in Heaven, Amen!

Ros. SOL.: But in the meantime, papa?

SOL. Is.: In the meantime? Ah? Yes, indeed, in the meantime. See this. (*Produces the booklet with the pictures of his deceased wife.*)

ESTHER: Ah, what nice pictures these! (*Upon recognition*) Woe's me. Sarahle.—May she rest in peace. What do you want with her pictures now?

SOL. Is.: Do you see this? The sweet face of your mother?

Ros. SOL.: My poor papa.

SOL. Is.: My poor orphan. You were so young then. You could hardly feel how terrible was our bereavement.

Ros. SOL.: Calm yourself, papa. Dear papa, be calm.

SOL. Is.: Ah, child, you remember her but dimly. But I—I—Oh, my poor orphan, the anguish of that moment.—No, no, I shall spare you, my dearest, dearest motherless child. What is once covered with the sod—it shall be forgotten. “From the dust thou camest, to dust shalt thou return.” But can you tell me why her sweet existence should have been snuffed out so suddenly, so brutally? No, no! It is not that either. Understand me. Suppose I give you one of these pictures for safe-keeping—would you calmly look on as the unclean hands of the vandal defaced it?

Ros. SOL.: I fail to see the trend of your thought, papa.

SOL. IS.: Never mind that. But would you witness such vandalism with cold indifference?

Ros. SOL.: Why, papa?

SOL. IS.: But would you?

Ros. SOL.: What a question! Of course not.

SOL. IS.: "Of course not," eh? And if the besotted vandal trampled them under foot—nay, befouled it, with his filthy spittle, could you look on and keep cool——

Ros. SOL.: Oh, papa.

SOL. IS.: —and master your indignation? Yet, what is this piece of paper? A worthless piece of worthless paper.

Ros. SOL.: Not so, father. To me it is not that. To me it is a reminder—however imperfect—of my mother, of her, who gave me birth, whose memory I revere, who was kind to me, and gentle and loving.

SOL. IS.: True, little one, true. Kind and gentle, and loving. How kind! How gentle! Woe's me! Woe is me! You will never fully comprehend your loss. Still, she was only human.

Ros. SOL.: We are all but human.

SOL. IS.: And you would defend this imperfect image of a mere human being, yet whom you respect?

Ros. SOL.: So I would, unquestionably.

SOL. IS.: And why?

Ros. SOL.: Because this worthless piece of card-board with my mother's features on it, would by the very attempt to defile it become hallowed to me; the danger of desecration would make it sacred to me, and to defend it with all my power would become a duty—a sacred duty, to shirk which, it were simply despicable.

SOL. IS.: Even so. "A sacred duty, you say, to shirk

which it were despicable," ah? And is not *He, He*, the Supreme Being on high as worthy of our respect? And has not *He*, in His infinite love, deigned to fashion us, His creatures, in his own blessed image? Isn't man, however imperfect, also a reminder—an unworthy reminder—of God Himself? Shall we then stand quietly by as hour after hour, day after day, year in, year out, is insult upon insult, injury upon injury hurled by these besotted Tartar cubs of vandals against His own chosen people? What more sacred duty is there than to guard against defilement His image imprinted not on dead paper, but here in the living quivering heart? What more imperative duty is there? Can there be? Nor shall I shirk it. Not I, I swear it. I will strike back. I will strike back.

ESTHER: Master of the world! Woe's me, Solomon, are you ill?

Ros SOL.: Calm yourself, papa; calm yourself. Oh, dear papachka, for my sake compose yourself. Please do.

SOL. Is.: I am calm, child. I am calm. Go now. Now go tell her the story of the wandering Jew. She may see the point of it more clearly now. Ha-ha-ha! Ha-ha-ha!

(Enters Ivan Ivanovich.)

Iv. IVAN.: Esther Isaacovna, mistress, the coalman is here.

ESTHER: Sh—shsh! Don't scream so.

Iv. IVAN.: (In lower tones) Yes, ma-am; and he begs to say—

ESTHER: Hush, I say. What does he want?

(Ivan Ivanovich whispers to her, saying something.)

SOL. Is.: (To Rosalie) Here he is, the Right Glorious, Orthodox master mine. He is the superior being. He may

reside wherever he pleases. All Russia, throughout its entire length and breadth, is open to him, and Welcome, sir! He may employ whomsoever he pleases, not I. He is the son of the fatherland, not I. He has rendered his country great service; he the superior being, the master. . . . I am only his inferior. Just look at him. See that brainless skull of his! That gorilla mug! It's repulsive. (*To Ivan Ivanovich, who, having done his errand, is about to leave*) Where art thou going? Just wait a second.

Ros. SOL. : Oh, papa ; please.

SOL. IS. : Don't you interfere now. I just want to have a few words with Mr. Son-of-the-Fatherland.

Ros. SOL. : Oh, papa ! papa ! With whom——

SOL. IS. : (*Shakes her off, as she tries to cling to him*) Don't interfere, I say. (*Shoves her aside and advancing towards Iv. Iv. bows to him.*) Accept my deepest regards. Ivan Ivanovich, sir. (*Bows again; Ivan Ivanovich, in the attitude of "attention," dares not breathe.*) See that petrified servility! My superior ! My master ! Thou brainless sovereign mine, have I done thee any harm? Ah? Open thy snout. Talk. Have I done thee any harm? I ask. Haven't I picked thee up from the very gutter, thou drunken beast? Haven't I? Answer.

Iv. IVAN. : Even so, sir.

SOL. IS. : Haven't I given thee employment. Bread and shelter? Ah?

Iv. IVAN. : Even so, sir.

SOL. IS. : Haven't I, in spite of thy own beastly stupidity, snatched thee from the clutches of vodka? Haven't I?

Iv. IVAN. : Even so, sir.

SOL. IS. : But for thy lucky chance that thou didst meet

me, what or where wouldest thou be now? Ah? At thy old age, ah? Like a scurvy dog thou wouldest have breathed thy last in the gutter, in the mire—ah?

Iv. IVAN.: Even so, sir.

SOL. Is.: Who then is master of the house, thou or I? Ah? I ask thee, ah? Who? Thou or I..

Iv. IVAN.: It is known who, sir.

SOL. Is.: It is known who, ah? Leave thou this house at once. Not a minute more shalt thou eat of my bread. My superior, my master, my sovereign! Out of here, thou Tartar breed! Out!

Iv. IVAN.: (*Retreating*) Even so, sir.

SOL. Is.: They'll pay thee off at the office.

Iv. IVAN.: (*Beginning to understand*) That is, sir, how is this, sir.

SOL. Is.: Just what I say, thou art discharged.

Iv. IVAN.: Even so, sir. Your pleasure, sir. Discharged—that is, how discharged, sir?

SOL. Is.: Simply discharged. Get thy sack and passport and be gone. It's plain Russian, thou idiot.

Iv. IVAN.: Oh God, my Lord.

SOL. Is.: Aha! Thou understandest now.

Iv. IVAN.: Akh, my luckless self. How have I displeased you, sir? I have done nothing; know nothing. Here is the cross for you, kind master, Solomon Isaac'ch, sir. Evil tongues have lied to you, that is; but I never, not so much, not a whit, that is, guilty. Okh, my bitter lot.

(*Sol. Is. turns away from him.*)

Ros. SOL.: Oh, papa, please.

SOL. Is.: (*Looking back*) That's all. They'll pay thee at the office.

Iv. IVAN.: But why, sir? Why? For Christ's sake, sir.

SOL. IS.: (*Facing him*) Why? Ah? Why? (*Grasping him by both shoulders and shaking him.*) Thou Tartar cub. Now it's for Christ's sake, ah? (*Pushes Iv. Iv. from him.*) And so it is, ha-ha-ha! The fool has hit the point. It's always for Christ's sake. Always. They know of no other incentive, those abominable hypocrites. (*To Iv. Iv.*) Be-gone, and dare thou never cross this threshold again.

Iv. IVAN.: Where shall I go? Oh God, my Lord, lost is my hapless gray head. Be not angry with me, kind master; evil-brewing tongues—sir—

SOL. IS.: Perhaps.

Iv. IVAN.: At my age, without work, without bread, without shelter.

SOL. IS.: Plenty of room in the village there, now that the Jews have been chased out.

Iv. IVAN.: Oh, Solomon Isaac'ch, find thou pity in thy heart, master; where can hapless I seek for a job, a home, for my crust of bread?

SOL. IS.: Ask the expelled Jews how they do it; thou may'st learn from them, if thy skull isn't too thick.

Iv. IVAN.: Oh, Sol Isaac'ch, little father, take thou pity upon my gray hair, my old age.

SOL. IS.: Pity? Ask aged Mordecai the tailor where he found it?

Iv. IVAN.: Mercy, kind master, mercy! For years have I served thee faithfully, honestly—

SOL. IS.: (*To himself*) Others have served for centuries as faithfully and as honestly.

Iv. IVAN.: —and thou hast always been a kind master, little father, Solomon Isaac'ch, and I got used to thee, as a

dog to his master, and to the house.—Oh, mercy, Rosalya Solomon'vna, young lady! Here have I lived; shall I now be driven out to die like a dog under a stranger's fence? Oh, my young lady! Oh, Esther S'limon'vna, mistress. Oh —ah—ah. (*Sobs.*)

ESTHER: (*Kindly*) Hush, you silly head! Hush. What mischief have you done.

Iv. IVAN.: I have—done—no—thing; know—no—thing.

ESTHER: Hush, now! We shall consider—wait.

Ros. SOL.: Enough! Oh, it's unbearable! Father, now I must have it out with you. Ivan Ivan'ch, leave the room. And you too, auntie. Please, please, dear auntie, I want to be alone with papa.

SOL. IS.: Why, are you hurt? Oh, I see. He is a Christian; if hurt he feels it. He is not a Jew.

Ros. SOL.: Have I deserved that, papa?

SOL. IS.: Akh, I didn't mean it, child. It's my aching sore that spoke up, not I. But what can we do? Poor, aged Mordecai and ten others like him need now Ivan's job. Shall we not help our brothers first? Eem anee lee, mee lee? If I am not for myself, who will be?

Ros. SOL.: But papa, consider. Shall so ordinary a bit of petty persecution as that Decision of the Senate have Satan's sway over your heart, your understanding, your sense of justice? Why, it has upset you.

SOL. IS.: Not so. It has only awakened me; I am just rubbing my eyes.

Ros. SOL.: Be it so! But has poor Ivan Ivanovich written that Decision? Has he made the laws, issued the ukases? Oh, my father, can't you see; it's our system of government.

SOL. Is. : Our system? No, thanks. It's theirs entirely; the Jews have no say in it.

Ros. SOL. : Nor have the Russians—Pole, Russian, Jew, Armenian and Finn groan alike—I mean, I mean, yes—we must all alike obey the law that the government makes for us; we are not responsible for its sins.

SOL. Is. : (*Kindly but impressively*) Responsible or no, but suffer we must. The sins of governments are visited upon the governed. This is the supreme law: None can escape it; all must obey it.

Ros. SOL. : It's a terrible law, papa, if true.

SOL. Is. : Unfortunately, it *is* true.

Ros. SOL. : I must consider. I must think.

SOL. Is. : Yes, my poor girl.

Ros. SOL. : (*Aside*) Oh, would I but could argue with him! But how can I? How can I? It'll break his heart. No! No! It's impossible. I must spare him. How? To spare one and let many suffer? Ah, it's a crime to be silent. But, oh! it's so cruel to speak! No, it isn't that. It's cowardice. I simply fear to reveal myself. Shall I then wait for the gendarmerie to encourage me? (*Aloud, with sudden resolution*) Listen, papa. Consider. I—I—You have said (*breaking out into sobs, and embracing Sol. Is.*). Oh, I cannot. It's awful, awful.

SOL. Is. : But it is true, child. Awful but true.

(CURTAIN.)

## ACT IV.

(*The same room.*)

### PART I.

SOL. Is.: (*Behind the stage*) Tell her to come at once. At once. Be quick. (*In the doorway, with fur coat and fur cap on.*) And, here—Masha. Be sensible, my good girl. Don't run into her room like a wild goose. Walk quietly, speak calmly.

MASHA'S VOICE: Yes, sir.

SOL. Is.: Now run. (*Shuts the door; takes off his fur coat hastily, but not his cap.*) Wonder of wonders. Free! Free! My David! my brother free! Impossible! Incredible! But I must think. Ah, that fluttering. (*Presses his hand to his heart.*) It's actually painful. To be calm, if only for one little second! I shall go mad for joy! But—why—not? Why not? Here I have it in his handwriting. Where is that letter? That blessed letter? That blessed messenger from Heaven? (*Produces a letter of several closely written pages.*) His hand. His. The elongated o's, German t's, bulging j's—his handwriting. My David. My brother. A free man! I simply cannot believe it. It is too good to be—false. Too good to be false. Ha—ha—ha! That's right. Oh, David! How my heart beats. The foolish boy! (*Reads*) "Safe and sound as a cucumber in cream, or as a purified soul or on the triple bosom of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—which doubtlessly proves that the Christian Trinity is but a Jewish unity." The foolish boy.

Twits me on my “patriotic orientalism,” as he calls it. To write this nonsense instead of saying something about himself! Just like him. Does not forget even old Ivan the Grumbler but hardly has a dozen words about himself. (*Turns a leaf and reads*) “My dearest, dearest mother; believe me, I am really well; alive and kicking.” And this is all—about himself. Ah, the foolish, foolish boy. Boy? Let me see. He is twenty-eight now. Oh, my brother, my David. (*Presses the letter between his palms, and raises his hands to heaven; then, suddenly recollecting himself, puts the letter hastily into his breast pocket.*) I must be calm. My poor Rosalie. (*Sits down.*) I must not overwhelm her. The joy may be too sudden, too sudden. Ah, no. I am mistaken. How tardy she is! But I must be calm: or, at least, look it; look indifferent and cool—as a “cucumber in cream.” (*Laughs.*) The foolish boy. (*Pause.*) And I thought him dead; and thanked Heaven for having thus delivered his soul! What of it? It only proves that I was faint-hearted and of little faith. Dear, reckless David knew better. He would be delivered both soul and body. Ha-ha-ha! How he would have laughed me to scorn, had I happened to be there and then to counsel patience and prudence. Ha-ha-ha! The patience of slavish submissiveness and the prudence of timid mediocrity. Why not? Fortune favors the brave and the daring capture fortresses. As though people did not escape from Siberia before now. These politicals—oh they are daring, enterprising, ingenious. Or isn’t David one of them? As clever and enterprising as any of them? With as ingenious a Jewish head upon his shoulders, and as quick-witted—as ever was the pride in Israel! Ah, the little flutterer!

(Presses his hand against his heart.) How it beats! My David, my brother, you are free again! Again alive among the living and I thought you dead. The buried-alive bursting open his grave! A resurrection! A miracle! A resurrection in modern times! A blessed miracle worthy of these martyred saints. Oh, mother, mother. At last has Heaven heard your prayer—taken pity on your anguished heart! At last! Oh, God! Blessed be Thou for ever and ever. Verily. "Blessed be Thou. Oh God, our Lord, King of the universe, who deliverest the imprisoned!"

(Enters Rosalie.)

Ros. SOL.: (*Surprised, aside*) What may that mean?

SOL. Is.: (*Trying to speak calmly*) Good morning, child.

Ros. SOL.: Good morning, papa. Why, haven't you gone to the office?

SOL. Is.: So I have, child, and returned.

Ros. SOL.: Forgottten something? Some accounts? Papers?

SOL. Is.: Is that the way to greet papa, you mischievous elf. Ah? Cross examining me by way of welcome? Ah? Oh, you self-appointed board of inquiry! Come, kiss me.

Ros. SOL.: (*Trying to enter into his mode, but thoughtful*) No, sir.

SOL. Is.: Come now, thou perverse little tease. Kiss papa, I say.

Ros. SOL.: No, sir.

SOL. Is.: No, sir; no, sir. And why, pray?

Ros. SOL.: In the first place, sir, one can't love to order—

SOL. Is.: This, in the first place. Good. And in the second place?

Ros. SOL.: In the second place, sir, because—Oh, papa; you have some important news. What is it, dear papa?

SOL. Is.: (*Embraces and kisses her*) Good news, child. Excellent news. Here. Read. Read, and believe it if you can. (*Hands her the letter.*)

Ros. SOL.: (*Agitated, her hands trembling. Aside*) Is it possible? Has he crossed the frontier?

SOL. Is.: (*Surprised*) Why, child? Your hands tremble.

Ros. SOL.: (*Her eyes on the letter*) Its nothing, papa. Only I didn't know you had correspondents abroad.

SOL. Is.: Read, little one, read.

Ros. SOL.: "Permit me to inform you, sir—" (*To conceal her excitement*) Akh, what a bad handwriting.

SOL. Is.: Read on, read on, you naughty faultfinder.

Ros. SOL.: (*Reads.*)

SOL. Is.: "Permit me to inform you, sir." How nice of him! Knew what he was about. Chose this round-about way of breaking the news to me. "Permit me to inform you, sir." Ah, cleverly done. Cleverly. My David, my brother!

(*Pause. Watches her as she reads.*)

Ros. SOL.: Oh, pap! (*Turns the leaves to find the signature.*)

SOL. Is.: (*Restraining her*) No, little one. Be not impatient. Don't look for the signature. Read on. Read on.

(*Watches her; then takes a turn in the room.*)

SOL. Is.: How hot it's here! (*Wipes his forehead, and*

as he does so he becomes aware that he has something on his head; takes off his cap; looks at it in surprise as if he does not know what it is or how it got there; then, upon recognition, bursts out laughing.) Ha-ha-ha! Ha-ha-ha! I shall go mad for joy. Ha-ha-ha! I shall go mad. Ha-ha-ha! (Rosalie looks up from the letter; their glances meet) Aha! Now you begin to understand. Good news, eh? Good news?

Ros SOL.: Oh, papa, uncle——

SOL. Is.: Read on, my dearest child! Read on!

Ros. SOL.: Papa, unc—uncle——

SOL. Is.: —is free, my child. Is free! (They embrace.) And abroad, and safe, and well!

Ros. SOL.: So he has crossed the frontier. At last. (Then recollecting herself) Oh, you know, papa, I have never given up hope. I have always believed it would come.

SOL. Is.: And I have thought him dead.

Ros SOL.: What joy! what happiness! (Embraces him again, laughs and cries. Tears herself away from him.) Oh, Babusya. Oh, grandma! (Starts for the door on the right.)

SOL. Is.: (Seizing her by the arm) Whither? Be calm, child. Be calm. The joy may kill mother. We must prepare her first. Be calm. I rely so much upon your co-operation.

Ros. SOL.: Yes, papa, yes. My hope—realized! That wild hope actually realized! an actual, good, solid, honest fact! Ha-ha-ha! Oh, papa, I can't believe it! My dream a fact! And now that it is a fact, my reason refuses to believe it—Ha-ha-ha! Ha-ha-ha! How—fool-ish—is reason! How rid—ic—u—lous! Ha-ha-ha! And I have

hoped for it all the time—and, oh, how fervently! Ha-ha-ha! I am losing my head!

SOL. Is. : Control yourself, my dear child! Be calm!

Ros SOL. : But I can't be calm! I feel as if all that dreadful suspense—No, no, papa. No. I don't know what I am saying. I mean that constant hoping, hoping in silence, without daring to share—That's it, papa. That's it.—My most fervent hope, that I nourished and cherished in my innermost heart but had to keep all ,all to myself—these long years—oh, I can keep it no longer. Oh, the joy! The happiness! I must speak of it? I must. I must shout! Shout, jump, dance, do some mischief! Oh, papa. (*Embraces him; cries and laughs, the crying predominating.*)

SOL. Is. : My dearest little birdie. I never knew you loved him so.

Ros. SOL. : Did I? Oh, auntie! auntie! (*Opening the door.*) Auntie! Dearest auntie!

ESTHER'S VOICE: What is it, Rosalie?

Ros SOL. : Quick, Auntie! Quick!

ESTHER'S VOICE: I am coming.

SOL. Is. : Be careful, child. Don't overwhelm her!

Ros SOL. : Yes, papa. But I haven't finished it, the dear letter. (*Kisses it.*)

(*Enters Esther.*)

ESTHER: (*Reproachfully*) Ai, Rosalie, whatever has got it into your head to shout so all over the house?

Ros. SOL. : (*Embracing and kissing her, but careful not to let her notice the letter.*) Now scold me to your heart's content. Oh, dearest, dearest auntie (*kisses her again.*)

ESTHER: What's the matter, Rosalie? You haven't been so wild these many a month. What has happened, Solomon?

SOL. Is. : (*Smiling*) Ask her.

ESTHER: Why, Solomon ; already back from the office ? You are not unwell—be it not uttered in an evil hour !—I hope.

SOL. Is. : Never felt better, my good Esther.

ESTHER: Then, what *is* the matter ?

SOL. Is. : She knows.

(*Esther scrutinizing Rosalie.*)

Ros. SOL. : (*Drawing herself up for better inspection*) Guess !

ESTHER: (*Disturbed*) Why, child ? Woe's me, you have been crying.

Ros. SOL. : Crying and laughing, and jumping, and cutting up, generally, in the wildest possible way. And he, too ; papa, too ; worse than I. Now guess !

ESTHER: Oh, Rosalie, be a good child.

Ros. SOL. : See this ? Now guess.

ESTHER: A letter ?

Ros. SOL. : And a good one. Oh, what a good one !

SOL. Is. : And good news. Joyful news.

ESTHER: From—from—

Ros. SOL. : Yes, auntie, yes. From him.

ESTHER: From David ? Is he well ?

SOL. Is. : Well, and safe.

ESTHER: (*Crosses over to the nearest window, touches the frosty pane first with one hand, then with the other; rubs her hands as if performing the rite of ablution.*) Blessed and praised be His beloved name ! Come, child. Read it to me ; every word of it. Oh, mother ! How happy she'll be. It'll be a new lease of life to her ! a balm to her soul !

Thanked be Thou, oh, Heavenly Father. Come, child, to her, at once. (*To Solomon*) You say, he is well?

Ros. SOL.: Well and safe—and (*glances interrogatively at Solomon Isaacovich, who nods assent*)—and happy.

ESTHER: Happy? (*The tears gathering in her eyes*) Woe's me. (*Sighs.*)

Ros SOL.: (*Insistently*) Yes, happy.

ESTHER: Happy in Siberia, in prison—Woe's me. Woe's me. Poor David.

Ros SOL.: But he is not in prison. Is he, papa?

ESTHER: (*Bewildered*) Not in prison?

Ros. SOL.: (*Hardly controlling her voice*) That's what he himself writes. (*Embracing her.*) Oh, auntie dear! What happiness! What joy!

ESTHER: Not in prison? How can this be? Woe's me, he hasn't served half his term.

Ros. SOL.: Well, do you see, Auntie dear, suppose—I don't mean to say it was so, but just suppose—uncle has behaved well, nicely, praiseworthy, and they pardoned him, let him out ahead of time.

ESTHER: (*Incredulous, shakes her head slowly*) Pardon? No, no! (*Lowering her voice*) He was one of those—woe to us—against the Tzar. They don't pardon such as he.

Ros. SOL.: The fact is, he has pardoned himself—

ESTHER: (*Terrified*) Good God! Do you mean—

Ros SOL.: —and is now abroad, well and safe, beyond all danger—

SOL. IS.: Thank God, sister, for His infinite mercy.

Ros SOL.: Uncle has escaped and is now free, a free man among free men.

ESTHER: (*Overwhelmed, in a lower voice*) A free man among freemen.

Ros. SOL.: And out of reach of the Tzar.

ESTHER: (*In a whisper*) —and out of the reach of the Tzar.

Ros. SOL.: And they can't do him any harm. He is free, free, free!

ESTHER: (*Her voice hardly audible*)—free, free, free. (*Drops into a chair exhausted; but recovers herself almost immediately; rises to her full length, staggers; Solomon hastens to her support; she embraces him and sobs on his shoulder.*)

SOL. Is.: Compose yourself, my dear sister. May these tears of joy cleanse your heart of all sorrow, of all bitterness!

ESTHER: (*Raising both hands to Heaven, in ecstasy*) Blessed be Thou, Oh God, our Lord, King of the Universe—(*Looks to Solomon to be prompted.*)

SOL. Is.: —that deliverest the imprisoned.

ESTHER: —that deliverest the imprisoned! Oh, Rosalie, dearest child, read to me the letter, the dear letter! Let me see it! Just let me feel it in my own hands—in my own hands for one little second. (*Takes the letter, looks at it puzzled, disappointed, kisses it and sighs.*) Ah, it's in Russian, and I can't make out his writing. Come, read it to me.

Ros. SOL.: There is a little in it in Yiddish, too; specially for you and grandma. (*Takes back the letter, and points out the place in Yiddish*) See. Here.

ESTHER: Dearest, kindest David! How kind of you.

Heaven will reward you for this thousandfold. (*Takes the letter and reads.*)

Ros SOL.: And, now, to grandma. We must not waste a minute. She is very low.

SOL. Is.: Ah, to break the news to her! The joy may kill her.

Ros. SOL.: You are calmer now, and so am I. Leave it all to me. But you must help me. What shall we tell her.—Oh, here is a plan, papa. Yes. That's it. I'll tell her that they have found at the post-office a bagful of letters of the Siberian mail that has long been lost, and that there may be a letter from uncle. I'll just give her hope enough to brace her up, and then gradually—Yes, papa? (*Sol. Is. nodding assent.*) Come, now. Come, Auntie!—Auntie, come!

(*Exeunt all. Rosalie leading, Solomon Isaacovich following, Esther lagging behind, reading the letter.*)

(CURTAIN.)

## PART II.

(*Sol. Isaacovich, Rosalie, and Esther.*)

Ros. SOL.: But when will the passports be ready?

SOL. Is.: To-morrow, I hope. I have set every bureaucratic wheel in motion. With money for lubricator, we'll get the passports in record time, you may be sure.

Ros SOL.: And uncle will get the telegram to-night. Oh, how glad he will be, and how impatient! Now you see, I was right. How nicely she took it. Poor grandma. It was interesting to watch her. She grew ten years younger

within the first hour. No. She must change her dress. Must put on gayer colors. Ha-ha-ha! It were a sin to look so sombre. It might mean ingratitude! As if Heaven didn't see it in her heart or could misinterpret her meaning.

SOL. Is.: Be not so irreverent, dear child. The ideal invariably speaks through its one worthy medium—matter. Hence, the spiritualizing influence of God's nature. It is poetry and art, when matter is the first to appeal to us. This is inspiration—the ideal at second hand. But when the ideal is first born in the heart, then we indeed know God. This is true religion in its sacred vestments, the ritual. To understand both art and religion, God and nature, is science.

Ros. SOL.: Oh, papa, perish all poetry, art, science, ideals and matter; railroads excepted. We are going to see uncle!

SOL. Is.: (*Smiling*) You reckless chatteringer.

ESTHER: And Masha goes with us. Mother will need so much care.

SOL. Is.: Yes, of course.

(*Enters Ivan Ivanovich.*)

(*Bows respectfully. Holds his fur cap in his hand; his trousers are tucked into his topboots; his cheap short fur coat is held tightly by a broad girdle of cheap colored stuff. Takes a step or two into the room, and then bows a second time waiting to be spoken to. Sol. Is. frowns. Ivan bows a third time; sighs; grows still more nervous.*)

Ros. SOL.: Ah, Ivan Ivanovich.

Iv. Is.: (*Bowing to her*) Even so, young lady.

SOL. Is.: Well? what now?

Iv. IVAN: (*Bows; takes another step forward, and*

*assumes the attitude of "attention!"*) Your pardon, sir, Solomon Isaacovich.

SOL. Is. : What's the trouble now? Hast got thy pay?

Iv. IVAN. : Even so, sir.

SOL. Is. : And thy passport?

Iv. IVAN. : Even so, sir. For without a passport where will one go? Nowhere, sir! Without a passport it's like this:—lost, sir; a vagabond. (*Sighs.*) Yes, sir. That's what it is.

SOL. Is. : Thou art no dullard, Ivan. Knowest the law, I see. But what's thy errand?

Iv. IVAN. : (*Bowing very low, then assuming the attitude of "attention!"*) May it please you, Solomon Isaac'ich. Do bear up with old Ivan. Old Ivan is a fool, sir; uneducated. It follows clearly, don't be angry with me, in case I, that's to say, somehow forget my station. Your pardon, sir.

SOL. Is. : Well, well. We won't quarrel to-day. Can I do anything for thee?

Iv. IVAN. : Thats how it is, sir, Solomon Isaac'ich. May it please you, I am your servant. Have served you faithfully and truthfully; that's to say these twelve years have I served. Got used to the family; that's how; am hitched to the house as if with a stout rope. Thought it would never break. (*Sighs.*) It follows clearly, the Lord willed it otherwise. Now it's all over. That's how it is—snapped asunder. The chain got rusty and it broke. That's where it bro-broke. (*Points to his heart.*) As to that, it's natural-like. "Shut up, thou old fool!"—say I to myself, I say—That's what masters are for. Hast eaten thy rations—I say, hast got thy passport, pack up and clear out. That's

master's will, I say, and don't thou kick." (*Sighs.*) Yes, sir.

SOL. Is.: (*Touched*) Ah, my poor Ivan. It is not I who have willed it, man.

Iv. IVAN.: Even so, sir. Just my words. "Thou old fool, I say, hold thy tongue. Solomon Isaac'itch—with your leave, sir—is a jewel of a man, and a kind master; has dealt fairly by thee, and squarely; picked thee up, so to say, from the gutter—that is, picked me up, a drunken beast and made a man of me. It follows clearly, he had to do it; couldn't help himself—that is, Solomon Isaac'ch, tell the truth before God and men, are you a bit sorry—perhaps one little bit sorry for old Ivan?

SOL. Is.: I am, old man. I am. Heaven be my witness.

Iv. IVAN.: Old Ivan is a fool, may be, but I guessed as much. It follows clearly, law's law. A new ukase, that is, has gone out to the people, throughout the country, to old and young alike, to Jew and Christian: At-ten-tion! Serve the Tzar and the fatherland! For, what is a Jew? A stranger, not of the true faith. Yes, sir. That's the rumor in town. . . . Politics, that's what it is. Politics! Tpfu! (*Spits out.*) Perish thou! Akh, thou politics! A cunning beast thou art, too much for a poor man, thou accursed witch. . . . Got astride of thy broomstick, and honest folk's eyes are blinded with dust, and a fellow is belabored so that each limb aches. Ukase, indeed. Here have I served, and served, and served, and there now, all of a sudden, take that, and that, straight between thy eyes—stunned. It's like one spits out on the floor and rubs it out with his boot—nothing remains, nothing. Thou hast been,

and thou art no more. That's where it pinches; right here, under the rib. Plump into the heart it goes, as if man were no man at all. So, I say, Solomon Isaac'ch, be you patient with old Ivan. May be it's not proper, or not according to rule—but let me bid you good-bye, and you, S'lomon Isaac'ch, my good master, think not ill of old Ivan, when he—is—gone. And you, too, my little mother, Rosalya, S'lomon'vna, God bless you. With my own eyes have I seen you grow up. As a wee bit of a hopping birdie have I known you—that's how, not taller—and here (*pointing to his heart*) were you pleased to build your nest—here! Now tear it all out. For-get it! (*Wipes his eyes on the sleeve of his coat.*) Time, fellow! Ge-e-et out. . . . Yes, sir. (*Turns to go. Rosalie places her hand on his shoulder.*)

Ros. SOL.: Papa!

(*Pause.*)

Iv. IVAN.: (*Musing aloud*) One Jew more or less starving for want of work—what does it matter?

ESTHER: (*To Ivan*) Why stand thus like a pole stuck in the ground! Knowest how to talk back, but no more. Speak up. Say, "Forgive me, Solomon Isaacovich.—"

SOL. Is.: No, no, Ivan. This isn't at all necessary.

Ros. SOL.: Papa, please.

SOL. Is.: (*Aside*) Strange how one moment of true happiness softens the heart and thaws out all the bitterness of it! (*To Rosalie*) Be it so, Rosalie. Let not this day of our rejoicing be clouded over by the faintest shadow of sorrow. Have your way, child.

Ros. SOL.: Oh, you're a dear, good papa. (*Kisses him.*) Now, haven't I told you so, you unbelieving Thomas? Who wins? We win. Hurrah! Plevna is taken! Why

don't you understand, my good Ivan Ivan'ich? It simply means, you may stay with us, and may again chide your young lady as much as you please. Do you understand now?

ESTHER: But don't you dare to talk back any more, thou old grumbler.

Iv. IVAN.: (*Crossing himself*) May the Lord bless you all.

Ros SOL.: Are you satisfied? Now, face about, right foot forward, at the double-quick, march!

(*Ivan Ivanovich mechanically obeys the order in true military fashion, but does it rather clumsily. They burst out laughing.*)

(*Exit Ivan Ivanovich.*)

MASHA: (*Putting in her head at the door, announces*) Natalya Osipovna.

ESTHER: The Major's daughter? How glad I am!

Ros. SOL.: (*Astonished, but acting promptly*) Show her in. (*Runs to meet her.*)

(*Enters Natalya Osipovna Retvinskaya.*)

(*Rosalie and N. O. shake hands warmly.*)

Ros. SOL.: Hand-shaking alone won't do to-day. (*Embraces her and between kisses, in a hurried whisper: "All's well. All!" Nat. Osip.: I know. Am informed. Must see your father alone. Urgent.*) Oh, I am so happy! (*Kisses her again.*)

NAT. OSIP.: Glad to hear you are so happy, Rosalya Solomonovna. (*Shaking hands with Esther and Sol. Isaacovich.*) Don't you see, Solomon Isaacovich, usually she is so unhappy, so morose, but to-day is an exception. Glad to hear it.

ESTHER: How kind of you to come to see us. I am so glad. You'll stay to dinner, won't you?

NAT. OSIP.: Sorry, I can't.

Ros. SOL.: Oh, do. Please. You are not running away so soon.

NAT. OSIP.: I really cannot. But if Esther Isaacovna will get me a cup of her excellent tea, I shall consider it a great treat indeed.

ESTHER: Why, of course. I'll have the samovar going in a minute.

Ros. SOL.: And I'll see about the tea things, auntie.

NAT. OSIP.: Thank you. (*To Esther*) And some of your lemon jelly, please. I can never forget its taste. It's delicious.

ESTHER: (*Delighted*) Ah, you like it?

NAT. OSIP.: Like it? Good Esther Isaac'ovna. I simply love it.

ESTHER: And have some fruit? And cream with biscuits?

NAT. OSIP.: I am afraid I give you too much trouble.

ESTHER: Trouble? Ai-ai-ai! Great kind of trouble this! Pshaw! Not at all. Eat and drink, and may you well thrive on it.

NAT. OSIP.: Thank you. You are very kind.

ESTHER: Trouble? I'll attend to that myself.

Ros. SOL.: And I'll help you, auntie. In the meantime, papa, be a ladies' man and pay her most chivalrous attention.

SOL. IS.: I fear I am no more of a ladies' man, than Esther is of a *grande dame*, Natalya Osipovna.

NAT. OSIP.: But she is much of a kind heart. And no polished *bon ton* can be a substitute for that.

SOL. Is.: Thank you.

NAT. OSIP.: However, to be frank with you, I have just been indulging in a little diplomacy; playing, in fact, on kind Esther Isaacovna's weakness in order to gain a short tête-à-tête with you.

SOL. Is.: Oh, is that it. You are indeed very frank, I should say.

NAT. OSIP.: Please forgive me, Solomon Isaacovich. You certainly know the world too well to fail to take such-like conventional little strategies at their true value. And if I was frank enough to call a spade a spade—why, sir, my experience of you teaches me to think this the best way of dealing with you.

SOL. Is.: Shake hands, Natalya Osipovna. Whatever your game, I confess I rather like the way you go about it. However—shall I be as frank? (*Offers her a chair.*)

NAT. OSIP.: Thanks. Most assuredly. (*Sits down.*)

SOL. Is.: (*Also sitting down.*) Beware, then, for I am not much of a follower of that crow in the fable to let go of my cheese in a hurry.

NAT. OSIP.: (*Smiling*) Oh, I am not flattering you, albeit I am here as—as—I come as a beggar.

SOL. Is.: (*Looking at her sharply*) Do I understand you right?

NAT. OSIP.: (*Sighs.*) I believe you do.

SOL. Is.: You desire to speak to me in behalf of your brother?

NAT. OSIP.: In behalf of my poor parents, rather; yes, sir.

SOL. Is.: (*Leaning his head on his hand, and his arm on the table, shakes his head slowly; then, rising*) No, no.

Please keep your seat. Don't trouble yourself. (*Aside*) That this should come on this day of all days. My dear David, to celebrate your deliverance with cruelty! (*Shrugs his shoulders.*) There is a pretty combination for you! (*Pause.*) Believe me, Natalya Osipovna, I cannot. I really cannot.

NAT. OSIP.: Pardon me. But Phineas Abraamovich assured us that you can easily help him meet his bills while papa is trying to raise the amount. And, surely, sir, you will not refuse to do us this great favor, especially when it is partly your duty to do so.

SOL. IS.: Duty?

NAT. OSIE.: Yes, sir. Duty.

SOL. IS.: You speak in the name of humanity, I suppose.

NAT. OSIP.: (*Firmly*) In the name of humanity and justice, sir.

SOL. IS.: Humanity—Justice, Duty—ha-ha-ha! You speak of them to a Jew?

NAT. OSIP.: Yes, sir. To you, the Jew and the man.

SOL. IS.: The man without a country, if you please.

NAT. OSIP.: I don't know about that. I do know, however, that it is not the country that makes the man, but it's the man that makes the country. But, oh! Solomon Isaacovich, I really cannot discuss generalities now. I merely wished to remind you that it was your determination to remove your plants to town that brought on this sudden drop in real estate in and about the village.

SOL. IS.: Oh, so it did hurt them a little?

NAT. OSIP.: Not a little, but very much.

SOL. IS.: And they feel it?

NAT. OSIE.: Oh, they feel it. Especially do my poor parents. Papa could have easily raised the amount, had not our property gone down in the general slump; and this, sir, is all of your doing.

SOL. IS.: The mill is mine, madame. The yards are mine. I have the right to do with my own whatever I please. I can do business wherever I choose, and if others have lost through my choice, so have I. It cost me a neat little sum, I can assure you. But I am well repaid—ha—ha—ha! Well repaid for my loss.

NAT. OSIP.: The more imperative then is your duty to help us out in our misfortune, since you take so much pleasure in having thrown the difficulties in our way.

SOL. IS.: Oh, is that it? Permit me, then, my good Natalya Osipovna, to refer you with your excellent sermon to them who take just as much pleasure in humiliating and insulting the Jews—in robbing us—

NAT. OSIP.: Is it our fault? Did my father do it? My mother? Oh, my poor parents. If you witnessed their suffering but for one second! The disgrace will kill them. Oh, sir, is there no pity in your heart?

SOL. IS.: Pity? What is that?

NAT. OSIP.: Ahh, Solomon Isaacovich, don't. For Heaven's sake, don't. I understand you. At some other time we may discuss your—your—what shall I call it? Shall I call it infatuation? Oh, what an infatuation! Poor, hapless, tortured Russia! Made frantic with the pain of oppression, almost crazed by it, are we finally reduced to an unresisting mass, that can be hammered into shape by *any* notion, however wild? You, Solomon Isaacovich, to be carried away by the desire for what? for revenge? You? You

to assume the role of a Shylock, of the Shylock of Ensk! You! It's enough to drive one mad!

SOL. Is.: As to the Shylock part of it, you may be right. But it is not revenge—Heaven is my witness it is not revenge. And if I ever felt in my very heart that it were hideous ingratitude in me to withhold from a fellow-being a favor that All-wise Providence was pleased to put in my power to bestow, I feel it to-day. Ah, no. It is not revenge—not that alone.

NAT. OSIP.: What then is it? The money? Oh, sir, would you see our family ruined, my brother in prison, my father disgraced, my mother's heart crushed for the sake of a little money?

SOL. Is.: A little money?

NAT. OSIP.: Surely, the sum is a trifle to you.

SOL. Is.: Money? You call it money! It is not money! It is the bread and butter of hundreds of the hunted, badgered, baited unfortunates whom they have expelled from that very same village of which your family, madame, are the noble land-owners. Your parents are not to blame, you say? Are, then, these unfortunate to blame? By one stroke of the pen, were families ruined by the hundreds. Men, women, and children—poor, innocent children—were made homeless. Shall I now say to the hungry little ones, to these suffering little innocents, tortured with pangs of hunger and cold, as they stretch their emaciated little hands and faintly beg for a crumb of bread—for a dry crust of bread—shall I say to them, You, homeless, defenceless, tortured, innocent little babes, go on starving, starving, starving—that the Major's son may be spared the punishment for his crime? Would that be justice? I leave it to you:

decide. Would it be justice to tell these hundreds of ruined fathers and mothers, themselves without food, clothing, shelter, robbed of their substance, to continue looking on with cold indifference as every little limb of their own children is convulsed with the unendurable pangs of cold and hunger, and pitilessly to shut their hearts against the appeals of their own flesh and blood, because there is one father, one mother, of noble birth, whom their son has disgraced—and their claim upon our sympathy comes first? Justice, isn't it? Or has the Jewish father no heart? The Jewish mother no feelings? Or has He, All-mighty God, blundered stupidly in picking out the Jews, from among all nations, for His own chosen people? Or shall the cowardly persecutor, because he is the stronger, be shown more consideration than they whom he persecutes? the torturer more than his victim? By Heavens, Natalya Osipovna, you ask of me too much. Money you call it? Yes, it is money. It is the only eloquent appeal that will stay the persecuting arm of your Orthodox Right-Glorious Russians? Had I this round little sum then, on that terrible day—Oh God! if I but had this money then—Or perhaps you don't understand me; you don't know the story. Permit me to relate it to you. Don't fear. I am not going to tell you anything extraordinary. You needn't be anxious. It's the usual thing; quite usual. On an Easterday—just the kind of day when such things ought to happen—your Russians moved, unquestionably, by the spirit of love and forgiveness truly Christian, started a little riot. Oh, they didn't mean any harm, of course; they only wanted to have a little fun, you know. So, they smashed Jewish houses, stores, homes,

maimed a couple of dozen men, women, and children, just for fun, for fun, killing in passing—

NAT. OSIP.: O, Solomon Isaacovich, have pity, spare me this!

SOL. IS.: Why, why, dear madame; it's the usual thing. Quite amusing, isn't it?

NAT. OSIP.: I will not listen any more. I can't. You have no right to torture me! (*Covers her face with her hands.*)

SOL. IS.: Aha! It hurts, ha! But you shall hear the story. My wife was among the killed. A young army officer of your faith, your race; perhaps, your kinsman; perhaps, a member of your own family, looked on, enjoying the fun. To him I fell upon my knees. Him I implored. Maddened by the poor shrieks of my wife, whom they were then murdering—in the street, in broad daylight—I implored him to save her, save her. But he only kicked me in the face with his boot. Naturally, since I had not the necessary round little sum with me to touch his most Christian heart. And you call it money! Only a little money! You speak to me of justice, humanity, duty. As a Jew and a man you address me. Nor shall you be disappointed. I am a man—I am a Jew. If it pleased All-wise Providence to entrust me with a few thousand rubles that I can spare, I swear to God, upon my soul and by the happiness of my only child, of my orphaned child, I swear it, that I will not betray that trust. Not a kopeck of my money shall go to the relief of one of the persecutors so long as there is one persecuted Jew in need of help. A favor done to a Christian is a favor robbed from the persecuted in behalf of the persecutor. Now, you understand me, Natalya Osipovna. I

am Shylock; not he, of Venice. I will not lend three thousand ducats to the noble Christian. I'll keep the money for the coming holidays, to buy with it from the Governor-General one week's protection for Jewish property, life, and honor. And your brother shall go to jail. To rob a Jew before Easter is as yet punishable by law. And your family's honor shall be dragged into the mire; the noble Major's name, disgraced; your mother's heart, crushed, crushed.

NAT. OSIP.: Oh, mercy! Mercy! Have mercy!

SOL. IS.: Mercy, eh? Mercy? Please, continue. Go it all; the whole length of the gamut. "It drops upon the place beneath as the gentle rain from Heaven. It's quality is not strained; it is twice blessed" and so on, and so forth. I know all about it. A Moscow fakir could not praise up his wares any better than did that virtuous she-shyster in trousers. But we are Jews; we don't know the article; it was never shown to us. Not once in nineteen centuries was a glimpse of it permitted to stray into the path of the wandering Jew. Your pardon. I forget. Torquemada did show us mercy. To save our souls, he burned our bodies. Such is Christian mercy! Ha—ha—ha!

(Pause.)

NAT. OSIP.: (*In a firm voice, but with an underlying note of agitation*) So, it seems, I have done all I could.

SOL. IS.: All you could.

NAT. OSIP.: And there is no use to go on begging?

SOL. IS.: None whatsoever.

NAT. OSIP.: Because there is no pity in the Jew?

SOL. IS.: No, none.

NAT. OSIP.: No, mercy? No relenting?

SOL. IS.: No, none.

NAT. OSIP.: At least, I hope, there is commercial honesty in the Jew?

SOL. IS.: (*Cautiously, as a careful fencer*) I pay my bills. My notes have not been protested.

NAT. OSIP.: Ah, but this is but obligatory legality; I speak of honesty.

SOL. IS.: I fail to grasp your meaning.

NAT. OSIP.: It is this. Suppose I rendered you a great service, so that the money that would save my brother, but is in your possession, is in fact mine; would you return me my money knowing that legally the debt is incollectible.

SOL. IS.: (*Impatiently*) With your leave, Natalya Osipovna, what good can this childish talk do either you, or me? You know well enough, that I don't owe you anything.

NAT. OSIP.: But you do.

SOL. IS.: Ah, you know I don't.

NAT. OSIP.: I know you do. (*Glancing about her uneasily*) Read this (*Handing him an open letter*).

SOL. IS.: (*Shrugging his shoulders, as he takes the letter and glances at the written page, out of politeness*). It is not addressed to me. (*Is about to return the letter, but quickly checks himself*) What is this?

NAT. OSIP.: Please, read it.

SOL. IS.: (*Growing more and more agitated, as he reads*) His writing. His. The bulging j's, the elongated o's. His hand. His turn of speech. His style. His. My David. My brother! What does this mean, Natalya Osipovna. For pity's sake, what does this mean?

NAT. OSIP.: Please, read it through! And (*anxiously*

*and eagerly) oh, Solomon Isaacovich, in the name of its writer, be quick! Be quick, lest we are interrupted. (Looks about her anxiously.)*

SOL. Is. : (*When through reading, presses both hands*) Oh, may God never withdraw his protecting arm from you. I knew there must have been some one outside the prison walls to help him. And it was you, dear Natalya Osipovna. You. Blessed be your noble heart. You saved my dear David. (*Starts to read the letter a second time.*)

NAT. OSIP. : Oh, David Isaacovich is too kind. He ascribes to me more than I have done.

SOL. Is. : Read what he says. Read.

NAT. OSIP. : (*Gently pushing back his hand with the letter*) I have some friends out there, and have written to them. Funds were necessary. . . .

SOL. Is. : And you never applied to me.

NAT. OSIP. : The fewer the persons involved, Solomon Isaac'ich, the safer the secret.

SOL. Is. : I understand. For, am I not a subject of the Tzar? You saved him! You! You! dear Soul! and I? I tortured you, gloated over your misfortune, refused to help you—you, who saved him, my brother, my David! You risk your life, your liberty! You bring me happiness. And I? (*Shudders.*) My God, I can't grasp it. My mind refuses to believe it. I shut my heart against your tears? Oh, what devilish trick this? What lesson in this wanton cruelty? But I didn't know, Natalya Osipovna.

NAT. OSIP. : Compose yourself, Solomon Isaacovich.

SOL. Is. : Certainly, I must not grieve you. And you had this blessed letter, right here, in this room, all the time,

yet did let me go on in that horrid way! Permitted me to torture you and—myself as well! How could you?

NAT. OSIP.: Believe me, I am not wholly to blame.

SOL. IS.: To blame you? Oh, no, no! You had your reasons I am sure. I ask no questions.

NAT. OSIP.: (*Smiling*) You will, at least, give me credit for having come myself instead of my poor parents: so much unnecessary tragedy the less.

SOL. IS.: Oh, thank you. From my very heart I thank you. (*Presses both her hands.*)

NAT. OSIP.: So what was I going to say? Oh, yes. You know I did not do it for money.

SOL. IS.: Why, of course. Such things are not done for money. There is not money enough to pay for them.

NAT. OSIP.: Well, then, you see, I did it for the cause, on principle, not even for comrade David himself, whom I had met but a few times all told, and even then only on business.

SOL. IS.: I understand. Let me shake your hand. God bless your brave heart. Oh, these politicals! They are true to one another. God bless them all!

NAT. OSIP.: You will understand now, I hope, how hard it was for me to turn this service for the cause to personal advantage.

SOL. IS.: Just like David. Yet they say that the age of saints is long past. Fools. With their hearts in their pockets, and their souls in their stomachs they think that logic is shaped by the appetite, and the spirit is chained to the bed-post. How says old Krilov, Natalya Osipovna? The rats have decided that there is nothing bigger than the cat. Ha—ha—ha!

NAT. OSIP.: Oh yes. Grandpa Krilov often built better than himself knew. So, you see, I feel as if I am trying to make you pay for what I have not intended to do for you, trying to get your money under false pretense.

SOL. IS.: This is your opinion. Yours. (*Threatening her with his finger.*) Don't you dare to mention it to me. I have my own view of the matter, my own estimate of your service.

NAT. OSIP.: (*Smiling*) Is it worth the sum I ask?

SOL. IS.: Forty-times-forty the sum, dear, noble soul. One second, please. Excuse me. I'll just fetch my check book.

NAT. OSIP.: (*Seizing him by the arm*) For pity's sake, what are you going to do? A check? For me? My parents must not know anything. We, politicals, are not patted on the head, you know. My case is worse than George's.

SOL. IS.: (*Strikes his forehead*) Why, certainly. That were a fine way of repaying you. Tantamount to a plain denunciation. I am too excited. This won't do. I must collect myself.

NAT. OSIP.: Above all, don't mention it to anybody, not to your best friends, not even to kind Esther Isaacovna or Rosalya Solomonovna. Dear girl, she is but a child after all; and so thoughtless! She may do irreparable harm before she knows it and then break her poor heart over it.

SOL. IS.: You are right, absolutely. Thank you.

NAT. OSIP.: And this letter, I must burn it.

SOL. IS.: (*With a parting glance at the letter and a sigh*) You are right.

NAT. OSIP.: (*Throwing the letter into the fire*) It is

safest thus. And, please, whatever you do for my parents, I have had no hand in the matter. I know nothing about it.

SOL. Is.: Right again. It seems that I can do nothing better than obey you.

NAT. OSIP.: (*Laughing*) Thank you for the compliment. You see how easy it is to manage Shylock.

SOL. Is.: (*Suddenly flushing up*) Yes, provided that you, or such as you—are—the Portia to manage him. None other need apply; the job will prove too big for them. From this day on, kind Natalya Osipovna, there will be two Russians held fast in my memory; one, that army officer; the other, yourself.

NAT. OSIP.: Thank you.

SOL. Is.: (*Musing aloud*) The old, old story; the good and the evil fighting for supremacy. Whom shall I help win the day? We shall see. Meantime, Natalya Osipovna, rest assured, Herzfarb and Company pay their bills.

NAT. OSIP.: So they do, Solomon Isaacovich. So they do.

SOL. Is.: You understand me?

NAT. OSIP.: Thoroughly.

SOL. Is.: And we are friends?

NAT. OSIP.: Undoubtedly.

(*They shake hands.*)

(CURTAIN.)

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